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*Sini Kangas, Mia Korpiola,  
Tuija Ainonen (Eds.)*

# **AUTHORITIES IN THE MIDDLE AGES**

**INFLUENCE, LEGITIMACY, AND POWER  
IN MEDIEVAL SOCIETY**



**FUNDAMENTALS OF MEDIEVAL  
AND EARLY MODERN CULTURE**



**Authorities in the Middle Ages**

# **Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture**



Edited by  
Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge

## **Volume 12**

# **Authorities in the Middle Ages**

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## Foreword

Authority (Lat. *auctoritas*) is a somewhat elusive and multifaceted term. In fact, “[t]he chameleonic qualities of authority”<sup>1</sup> may be the reason why the word does not appear in any form (*auctores*, *auctoritas*, *auctoritates*, *authority*, *autorité*) in several general encyclopedias on the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> As authority does not easily render itself to succinct, yet comprehensive definitions, this may have contributed to a reluctance to include the word or a tendency to omit it altogether. Moreover, as perceptions and definitions of authority have varied in time and place, sensitivity to the historical and cultural context is also necessary in order to avoid anachronism.<sup>3</sup>

In certain other encyclopedias, authority is only discussed in the context of texts, their authorship, and power to influence by esteem and reputation. As an author had to write his/her own text with reference to those of others, relying on sources that gave a clear and reliable account of the truth was essential. Ultimately, this element of veracity made God the fount of all authority in the Middle Ages, while Scripture and the Church Fathers were also considered highly authoritative as witnesses of truth.<sup>4</sup>

The authorship of texts is one aspect of medieval authority, certainly, but hardly a comprehensive one. The Latin etymology of the word *auctoritas* was *augere*, to augment, and in ancient Rome, *auctoritas* had several meanings, many of which were legal. An *auctor* was a source, a person who initiated

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1 Leonard Krieger, “Authority,” *Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener et al., vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968): 141–62; here 141.

2 *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid* 1 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1956); *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1982); Joseph Dahmus, *Dictionary of Medieval Civilization* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984); Wilhelm Volkert, *Adel bis Zunft: Ein Lexikon des Mittelalters* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1991).

3 See Krieger, “Authority” (see note 1), 141.

4 G. Bernt, “Auctores,” *Lexikon des Mittelalters* I (Munich and Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1980), 1189–90; G. Bernt, “Auctoritas,” *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Munich and Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1980), 1190; George Ferzoco, “Authors and Authority,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Robert E. Bjork, vol. 1 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 209; Jaime García Álvarez, “Auctoritates,” *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages* I, ed. André Vauchez, trans. Adrian Watford (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2000), 130; Jaime García Álvarez, “Auctoritates,” *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du Moyen Âge*, ed. André Vauchez, vol. I (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1997), 147. See also the introduction by Albrecht Classen in this volume.

acts and in whom information or acts originated. The *auctor* also validated or guaranteed the transactions of others unable to conclude them themselves, thus “authorizing” them. Various legal technical terms referred to anything from the authority of the head of the family (*auctoritas patris*) to that of the senate (*auctoritas senatus*) or of the tutor (*auctoritas tutoris*). In addition, *auctoritas* signified prestige or persuasive moral power, commanding respect and obedience in others by personal qualities.<sup>5</sup>

With the onset of Christendom, several new religious authorities were introduced: divine, Christ’s, Scriptural, patristic, and church authority. The authority of tradition was reduced in favor of new sources of prestige and power. In the course of the Middle Ages, the number of theological authorities grew considerably.<sup>6</sup> Authoritative texts and writers also appeared in other sciences (philosophy, law, medicine, etc.). Some were new, some new but dressed in old clothes, while others were overtly transmitted from Antiquity. At first, vernacular literature did not have an authoritative position, but rather its value lay in “transmitting stories and knowledge.” However, the subjective power of the “authorial self” started to be valued in the course of the later Middle Ages, and some vernacular writers gained an increasingly prominent role as models and authorities in their own right.<sup>7</sup>

Considering the scope of the term already in antiquity, definitions concentrating mainly on authorship and texts represent too narrow an approach. However, few encyclopedias have attempted definitions of authority that broaden the scope of the term to encompass a more general usage beyond authorial voices and textual traditions. Authority has been defined as “a quality by which a given being increased his natural condition.” Thus, the use of the term *auctoritas* was extended both to persons or institutions having or receiving it and even to texts or documents expressing it.<sup>8</sup> Authority could be a God-given gift, an innate charismatic quality, ancestry or prestige, but it could also be legally invested in its holder by solemn rites, rituals or acts of empowerment. A person or thing with authority was considered credible. He, she or

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<sup>5</sup> Adolf Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 43.2 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1953), 368–69; Krieger, “Authority” (see note 1), 141–46.

<sup>6</sup> Krieger, “Authority” (see note 1), 147. See also the article by Sverre Bagge in this book.

<sup>7</sup> Ferzoco, “Authors and Authority” (see note 4), 209. See also the article by Cristian Bratu, “*Je, aucteur de ce livre*: Authorial Persona and Authority in French Medieval Histories and Chronicles,” in this book.

<sup>8</sup> Jaime García Álvarez, “Authority” (see note 4), 134. See also the original French, Jaime García Álvarez, “Autorité” (see note 4), 152.

it was also perceived as capable of legitimately ruling, governing, conferring dignities, and effectively performing various (legal) actions.<sup>9</sup>

Divine and religious authority defined and formed the world order, constituting social order together with other secular authorities. Thus, in its wider societal context, authority is discussed in connection with terms such as power (Lat. *potestas*) or majesty (Lat. *maiestas*). While power could be seized suddenly by sheer brutality or force, authority inferred a broadly held legitimate aspect and an ability to influence others by other means than coercion. Although late medieval philosophical thought (Aristotelianism, nominalist philosophy) came to criticize the notion of authority by means of reason (Lat. *ratio*), this did not alter the fact that medieval people were situated in hierarchical structures, created by authority and power relations.<sup>10</sup>

In modern sociology, the link between authority and power developed very strong. In the writings of the founding fathers of the discipline such as Weber and Marx, the two terms could be used synonymously in various contexts. For Max Weber (1864–1920), authority represents socially a constructed form of power, the ability to give orders with expectation of obedience. Members of the society submit to authority without coercion, irrespective of their individual aims or goals, if they can agree on its legitimacy. This kind of social authority is a tangible manifestation of the sources of power, tradition, charismatic leadership and legal culture, and it may thus remain effective only as far as its root cause exists.<sup>11</sup> Obedience to authority is based upon the internalization of communally shared and accepted norms. The process of sharing does not, however, equally include everyone involved. Individual chances of participation in ongoing societal negotiation are directed—and perhaps biased—by class and status-based hierarchies.

Among the followers of Weber, Michael Mann has raised the number of the ideal types of power to four by adding authority to the list as an independent

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**9** Jean Gaudemet, “Autorité,” *Dictionnaire du Moyen Âge*, ed. Claude Gauvard, Alain de Libera, and Michel Zink (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 113–14; García Álvarez, “Authority” (see note 4), 134. For the original French, see Jaime García Álvarez, “Autorité” (see note 4), 152. See also the discussion of authority and power by Sverre Bagge, “From Fist to Scepter: Authority in Norway in the Middle Ages,” in this book.

**10** Gaudemet, “Autorité” (see note 9), 113–14; García Álvarez, “Authority” (see note 4), 134; García Álvarez, “Autorité” (see note 4), 152–53.

**11** Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen: Paul Siebeck, 1922); “Politik als Beruf,” *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, vol. 17 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992).

component.<sup>12</sup> According to Mann, authority is a kind of exercise of power that institutions and groups consider beneficial. It is thus based upon shared notions of respect and adhesion to communal norms and hierarchical structures. Authority, like any other sources of power, is socially constructed and rooted in ideology or economical, military or political influence.<sup>13</sup>

Karl Marx (1818–1883) promulgated ownership of capital and production equipment as the sources of authority and power (which he treats as synonymous), as well as social inequality, which he saw as the source of misery and strife.<sup>14</sup> Whereas the criticism of capitalism has had a major impact on economic theories and political science, Marx's ideas of class struggle represent the first social historical definition of the division of authority in industrial societies.

Since the days of Marx and Weber, researchers have continuously recognized class, wealth and status as prominent indicators of authority in human societies. From the 1970s onward, the scope of the term has expanded significantly, as novel approaches to authority, social stratification, socio-cultural dimensionality and networks have gradually framed a new fulcrum for the research. A well-known example of this shift is Norbert Elias's theory of the civilization process, which defines authority as the elite's segregation from the masses by its capability to choose among cultural trends and fashions a set of manners, behavior and style, which gradually becomes a social preference and framework for what is understood as decent and civilized human existence.<sup>15</sup>

According to the present paradigm, the idea of authority is flexible and fluid. Authority encompasses not only such classical dimensions as influence, ideology, policymaking, and responsibilities in society, but it is also closely interlinked with such aspects as gender, age, race, ethnic background, and education. Whereas some of the authority-related components may be

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* (see note 12), 22–32.

<sup>14</sup> Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Hamburg: Verlag Otto Meisner, 1867); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei: Veröffentlicht im Februar 1848* (London: Working Press, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1976), 64–109; see also Albrecht Classen, "Introduction" and id. "Sexual Desire and Pornography: Literary Imagination in a Satirical Context. Gender Conflict, Sexual Identity and Misogyny in "Das 'Nonnenturnier'" , " *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: New Approaches to Fundamental Cultural-Historical and Literary-Anthropological Theme*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 3 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 1–142, 649–90.

acquired, many cannot. Even more paradoxically, the individual components may coexist, converge and overlap, as well as contradict and collide.

As we understand the status quo, authority may not exist without the social context and all the subgroups involved in its making. According to the theories of Michel Foucault and Manuel Castells, the sources of authority have become strongly situational. Accordingly, authority may rarely reside in the orbit of a single institution or person, but because of its partial and contextual nature, it is continuously negotiated, re-negotiated and shared by various interested parties.<sup>16</sup> These parties have their access to power structures through new forms of social media.<sup>17</sup>

In the twenty-first century, historians emphasize the gradual nature of change, longevity of tradition and the importance of the *longue durée* in the interpretation of the human past. Whether strong or weak, direct or indirect, legitimate or coerced, shared or seized, authority is very much seen as an institution based upon and limited by norm and tradition. As such, authority functions in a society to maintain and conserve rather than revise. Gender historians have addressed this perspective in several interesting studies, including Judith Bennett's theory of patriarchal equilibrium, which states that although female experiences have changed over the past centuries, women's status as compared to that of men has remained remarkably unchanged.<sup>18</sup>

The present volume discusses and analyzes a plethora of sources of authority in various parts of Europe during the long Middle Ages. The authors of the book look at a variety of ways that authority was construed and negotiated—occasionally even denied—in connection to other parallel and/or rival authorities. The scope of this book includes textual traditions, religion, and rulers, but it also goes beyond this. The goal is to form a picture of the medieval understanding of authority: how it was established, granted or seized, how it was constructed, contested or maintained, and what were its manifestations and definitions?

This book is divided into two different spheres, the ecclesiastical and the secular. The first part of the book examines the human relationship with the divine, and the attempts to interpret and transmit the celestial authority into human affairs. The timeline of the investigations spans from late antiquity, with Maijastina Kahlos's article on the uses of the past in the search for

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<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité. La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 85–97.

<sup>17</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 196–99, 260, 470–71.

<sup>18</sup> Judith Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 54–71.

authority for Christianity itself, through the early debates leading towards the Reformation, with Sean Otto analyzing the use of the same established and accepted authority (Augustine) to pursue opposing ends. Medieval authors were aware that textual authorities were fluid and changeable: Csaba Németh takes us through a literary process of fabricating an authorial text and Robin Sutherland-Harris draws our attention to the authority of oral testimony, written charters, and cartulary material in general. No medieval account of authority is complete without a consideration of the medieval papacy and the authority it demanded and was granted in the Middle Ages. Ken Grant examines the rhetoric of demands for papal authority, while Sini Kangas re-examines the question of the role of the papacy in the movement of the First Crusade. The significance of the support of the papacy and local ecclesiastical authorities is evident when Johnny Jakobsen analyzes the Dominican role in transmitting theological teaching to the Northern and Eastern fringes of medieval Europe. The northern dimension is also present in Jill Bradley's research on the visual strategies for the establishment of authority in baptismal fonts, which were adapted to the local circumstances.

In the second part the object of research is the interaction between people in the medieval world. The formation and endurance of authority are at the core of our investigations. What were the strategies that enabled medieval people to command respect and obedience and granted them prestige and moral power? Sverre Bagge guides us through the changing perception of secular authority from expressions of physical prowess to ritual signs and acts of empowerment in Old Norse sagas. Kirsi Kanerva looks at the deceased and their power over the living in Icelandic saga literature. Cristian Bratu and Albrecht Classen examine literary texts, Bratu observing the author as authority in French histories, and Classen analyzing the genre of travel writing and the significance of traveler as an accepted and yet also disputed authority figure. Mollie Madden and Alexandra Vukovic both examine the top of the secular hierarchy, Madden focusing on royal authority and its demands for obedience in Gascony, and Vukovic on the strategies of a Serbian queen in political power struggles. In the concluding Charlotte Vainio observes the possibilities of wives to use legal authority on their own. In these articles there are many overlapping and recurring themes, which interact with the issue of authority. The studies in theology, philosophy, history, law, gender, politics, literature and art history all offer another contribution to the concept of authority. Only through observing the different manifestations and uses of authority, be it personal, textual, or visual, can the full image of the elusive term "authority" start to emerge. Like a medieval stained glass window, the picture is a complex network of interlock-

ing pieces, available only when all the different colors are placed together to interact with each other.





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Albrecht Classen

# **Introduction: The Authority of the Written Word, the Sacred Object, and the Spoken Word: A Highly Contested Discourse in the Middle Ages**

With a Focus on the Poet Wolfram von Eschenbach and the Mystic Hildegard von Bingen

## **The Authority of the Church**

Anyone who approaches one of those massive, towering medieval Gothic cathedrals, studies its fabulous, richly decorated facade, and thereupon enters the monumental church building, will be quickly awed by the highly spiritualized space. These spiritual interiors draw the spectator or parishioner all the way down the central nave toward the altar, and then from there invite him or her to look up to the enormous stained glass windows, such as those in Tours in France, in Cologne in Germany, Milan in Italy, or Lincoln in England. Witnessing that religious space, being part of it in an aesthetic and spiritual manner, we would no longer need to ask what the highest authority was in the Middle Ages. Not the architect, not the bishop, not even the Pope, but very simply, God. Every element of a Christian church, whether built in a Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, or Baroque style, conforms to that ultimate purpose, that is, the glorification of God, providing Him with an appropriate space where the pious and devout can come and worship Him, submitting themselves to the tutelage of the clergy as the worldly representatives of His authority.<sup>1</sup>

If all that were not enough, then the Gregorian chant, the liturgy, and the mass performed by the priest would complete the daunting picture of the divine authority that controlled all life here on earth during the Middle Ages and beyond. Indeed, it is a huge shadow that the cathedral casts, both then and even today, as if to leave no doubt as to who was completely in charge in

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<sup>1</sup> See the contributions to *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage, and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom*, ed. Katherine Allen Smith and Scott Wells. *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions*, 142 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

both this and the other world.<sup>2</sup> In fact, we would not be far off if we identified the Gothic cathedral as one of the most impressive material manifestations of heavenly Jerusalem here on earth, truly a bold architectural enterprise, almost tantamount to human hubris, and yet still fully in conformity with the ideology embraced by the Church, which claimed absolute authority on earth assisting all Christians to find the way to the afterlife.<sup>3</sup> Religious space itself constitutes absolute authority, while even the clergy operate “only” as its functionaries.<sup>4</sup> As the “Mother” of all Christians, the Church enjoyed, indeed, a pervasive control and influence throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence the papacy wielded the highest, if not the most threatening, authority, despite many conflicts, tensions, and extensive strife within the institution itself and among many contenders for the Holy See throughout the period.<sup>6</sup>

We could almost end right here, without having really started, because in the Christian world view nothing else seems to have mattered more, and if everyone during that time period had simply embraced that notion, not much would have happened in the Middle Ages. Both the historical annals and the libraries of literary texts would have been rather thin, perhaps even dry and boring, because divine hierarchy would have provided all answers and directed

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2 There are many critical studies that confirm these observations, see now, for example, Roland Recht, *Believing and Seeing: The Art of Gothic Cathedrals*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Christopher Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral: the Architecture of the Great Church 1130–1530*. Rpt. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008). For a history of everyday life in the shadow of the Church's authority, see Gerd Althoff, Hans-Werner Goetz, and Ernst Schubert, *Menschen im Schatten der Kathedrale: Neuigkeiten aus dem Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998).

3 Wilhelm Schlinck, “The Gothic Cathedral as Heavenly Jerusalem,” *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art: Studies in Honor of Bezalel Narkiss on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Bianca Kühnel (Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998), 275–85.

4 See the contributions to *À la recherche de légitimités chrétiennes: Représentations de l'espace et du temps dans l'Espagne médiévale, IXe–XIIIe siècle. Actes du colloque tenu à la Casa de Velázquez, Madrid, 26–27 avril 2001*, ed. Patrick Henriët. Annexes des cahiers de linguistique et de civilisation hispaniques médiévales, 15 (Lyon: ENS éditions; Madrid: Caa de Velázquez, 2003); Dawn Marie Hayes, *Body and Sacred Place in Medieval Europe, 1100–1389*. Studies in Medieval History and Culture, 18 (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

5 Megan McLaughlin, *Sex, Gender, and Episcopal Authority in an Age of Reform, 1000–1122* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 127–28.

6 Walter Ullmann, *Die Machtstellung des Papsttums im Mittelalter: Idee und Geschichte*. Trans. Gerlinde Möser-Mersky (Graz, Vienna, and Cologne: Verlag Styria, 1960); Karl F. Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).

people in their worldly affairs. God's hierarchy would have completely stifled all human attempts to establish any authority of their own.

Fortunately, if we may say so, human history is mostly made up of other stuff, reflecting a wide range of constant disagreements, internecine conflicts, protests, riots, political coups, uprisings, counter movements, revolts, and wars.<sup>7</sup> Each one of these radical movements or uprisings represented profound challenges to the central authorities in the Middle Ages, above all to the Church, but also to the ruling class, the nobility. Universities and individual scholars, as well as alternative religious groups such as the beguards and beguines, then the *Devotio moderna*, in their own way deeply challenged the authority of the Catholic Church.<sup>8</sup>

As impressive as it certainly was, the Gothic cathedral thus served only as an icon of an enormously powerful institution: it did not represent total hegemony, despite all attempts by the Catholic Church to quash any opposition and alternative opinions. The struggle for authority ran throughout the entire Middle Ages, from the time of the Arian-Athanasian conflict to the rise of the Cathars and Waldensians, to the challenge of the Lollards and Hussites, and finally to the Protestant Reformers.<sup>9</sup> Many efforts have already been made to come to terms with this amorphous topic, whether we think of the contributions to Fourteenth Biennial St. Louis Symposium on German Literature (1999/2001),<sup>10</sup> the Odense conference proceedings *Text and Voice: the Rhetoric of Authority in*

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7 Morrison, *Tradition and Authority* (see note 6). See the contributions to *Reform and Authority in the Medieval and Reformation Church*, ed. Guy Fitch Lytle (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1981); and the contributions to *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage, and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom*, ed. Katherine Allen Smith and Scott Wells (see note 1). See also the seminal studies by Walter Ullmann, *The Papacy and Political Ideas in the Middle Ages*. Variorum Reprints: Collected Studies Series, CS44 (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976).

8 For recent comments on this large discourse, see the contributions to *Autorität und Wahrheit: Kirchliche Vorstellungen, Normen und Verfahren (13.–15. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Gian Luca Potestà. Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, 84 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012).

9 See, for instance, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources*, trans. and annotated by Walter L. Wakefield (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Michael Frassetto, *The Great Medieval Heretics: Five Centuries of Religious Dissent* (New York: BlueBridge, 2008). Many of these issues are now nicely addressed by Morimichi Watanabe, *Nicholas of Cusa: A Companion to His Life and His Times*, ed. Gerald Christianson and Thomas M. Izbicki (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 11–74.

10 *The Construction of Textual: Authority in German Literature of the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. James F. Poag and Claire Baldwin. University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures, 123 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

*the Middle Ages* (2004)<sup>11</sup> or of those assembled in the volume *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage, and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom* (2009).<sup>12</sup> Authority is also closely associated with “authorship,” particularly in literature, in theological texts, in philosophy, in the visual arts, and in scientific texts. The further back we look, the less information we get about individual authors or artists, but the issue was, nonetheless, of critical importance, especially with regard to the biblical text. The contributors to *Autorentypen* offered highly insightful explorations of the various types of medieval authors, from clerics to goliards, chroniclers, and mastersingers, city scribes and secular poets, demonstrating how difficult it can be to come to terms with the whole concept of authorship.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, during the Middle Ages those who still believed in ancient or folkloric wisdom, healing powers, magic, or charms never completely disappeared.<sup>14</sup> Even the Christian Church acknowledged that phenomenon many times, when it allowed syncretism to creep into its own artworks, whether in the form of pictorial apotropaism or playful sculpture (corbels, misericords, gargoyles, capitals, baptismal fonts, etc.).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, early-medieval charms, late-medieval folk customs and rituals, and even the fanciful inclusion of the “green man” or of the “wild man” in medieval art confirm this observation, clearly reflecting the fragile relationship between the dominant Church and the people.<sup>16</sup>

We all know of the major conflicts raging throughout the Middle Ages, involving Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and it is not necessary here to

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11 *Text and Voice: the Rhetoric of Authority in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marianne Børch (Odense: University Press of South Denmark, 2004).

12 *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage, and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom*, ed. Katherine Allen Smith and Scott Wells (see note 1).

13 *Autorentypen*, ed. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger. *Fortuna vitrea*, 6 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1991). See, especially, the studies by Wachinger, Ursula Peters, Peter Johaneck, Volker Honemann, and Horst Brunner.

14 Irmgard Hampp, *Beschwörung, Segen, Gebet: Untersuchungen zum Zauberspruch aus dem Bereich der Volksheilkunde*. Veröffentlichungen des Staatlichen Amtes für Denkmalpflege Stuttgart, Reihe C: Volkskunde, 1 (Stuttgart: Jäck, 1961); Verena Holzmann, “*Ich beswer dich wurm vnd wyrmin ...*”: *Formen und Typen altdeutscher Zaubersprüche und Segen*. Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie, 36 (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2001); Wolfgang Beck, *Die Merseburger Zaubersprüche*. *Imagines Medii Aevi*, 16 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003).

15 Wolfgang Ernst, *Beschwörung und Segen: Angewandte Psychotherapie im Mittelalter* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2011).

16 *The Pagan Middle Ages*, ed. Ludo J. R. Milis, trans. Tanis Guest (Woodbridge, Suffolk, et al.: Boydell Press, 1998).

discuss the countless wars among kings, barons, dukes, and other military leaders, all of them vying for authority, influence, control, and wealth. The Hundred Years War between England and France might be one of the best examples, but the *Reconquista* on the Iberian Peninsula also illustrates the fundamental issue at stake here: the fight for absolute authority over lands and the struggle by the Christians against their religious neighbors.<sup>17</sup> The history of the Middle Ages seems to comprise a never-ending series of violent conflicts, especially when it seems that there was not one ruler who could completely rely on the support of all of his people all the time.

Moreover, there was also a very real struggle for authority within the world of philosophers, theologians, medical doctors, artists, and writers, all competing for the greatest influence at their own institutions, in public, and at court. One most impressive example would be the bitter conflict between Peter Abelard (d. 1142) and many of his contemporaries at the various Parisian and other French schools. In short, the exploration of authority at any given time immediately takes us to the core of that culture and illustrates most glaringly where the critical power positions rested, what the central points of disagreement were, who controlled the resources, and who could make his or her voice heard the best.<sup>18</sup>

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**17** Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (New York: Blackwell, 1984). See, most recently, David Whetham, *Just Wars and Moral Victories: Surprise, Deception and the Formative Framework of European War in the Later Middle Ages*. History of Warfare, 55 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009); Alessandro Vanoli, *La reconquista*. Universale paperbacks Il mulino, 566 (Milan: Il Mulino, 2009); Juan Antonio Cebrián, *La aventura de la Reconquista: La cruzada del sur* (Madrid: La esfera de los libros, 2009).

**18** There is much research on authority in the Middle Ages, representing the wide range of relevant topics; see, for instance, *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover, NH, and London: University Press of New England, 1989); Cynthia J. Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1995); *The Growth of Authority in the Medieval West: Selected Proceedings of the International Conference, Groningen 6–9 November 1997*, ed. Martin Gosman, Arjo Vanderjagt, and Jan Veenstra. Mediaevalia Groningana, 25 (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1999); *The Construction of Textual Authority*, 2001; *Citation and Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Musical Culture: Learning from the Learned*, ed. Suzannah Clark and Elizabeth Eva Leach. Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music, 4 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005); *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval Seals*, ed. Noël Adams, John Cherry, and James Robinson. Research Publications, 168 (London: British Museum, 2008). The term “authority” is actually often used in a very general sense for all kinds of literary-historical, historical-sociological studies; see, for instance, the contributions to *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice*, ed. Stephen Patridge and Erik Kwakkel (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

Perhaps surprisingly, the questions touched upon so far appear, *mutatis mutandis*, quite similar to those that we have to face today. After all, authority concerns all human interaction, and, moreover, touches on man's general need for and quest for a divine force, the ultimate limit, and source, of all human existence. Those people who can gain the closest proximity to that source of power—whether priests, ministers, rabbis, or imams—have traditionally enjoyed the highest respect or authority. In this regard not much has changed since the Middle Ages. Aura and charisma have always been of a timeless nature. When kings visited a city, for instance, sick people, believing that a personal encounter with their venerated sovereign might make them well again, crowded around him to experience the power of the *touche royale*.<sup>19</sup> Similar power was attributed, of course, to shrines, altars, relics, and the clergy at large, inspiring thousands of people to go on pilgrimages, often as far as Jerusalem and the Sinai.<sup>20</sup>

Today, people still throng to see their head of state when she or he appears in public, and the tabloid press plays its own part in creating and sustaining the veneration, if not worship, of outstanding athletes, rock stars, actors, or politicians, as well as ecclesiastics, if only rarely philosophers, authors, or painters. However, charisma can also be easily destroyed or dissipated when external or internal circumstances radically change, as in the case of the (in)famous U.S. golfer Tiger Woods in 2010. Others continue to enjoy lasting fame, if not worship, beyond their death, such as Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, and Michael Jackson.<sup>21</sup>

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**19** Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*. Trans. J. E. Anderson (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1973). The phenomenon was still seriously discussed in the late seventeenth century, see John Browne, *Adenochoi-radelogia, or, An anatomick-chirurgical treatse of glandules & strumaes, or Kings-Evil-swellings: together with the royal gift of healing, or cure thereof by contact or imposition of hands, performed for above 640 years by our kings of England, continued with their admirable effects, and miraculous events ...* (London: Tho. Newcomb for Sam. Lowndes, 1684); see also the contributions to *Charisma und religiöse Gemeinschaften im Mittelalter: Akten des 3. Internationalen Kongresses des "Italienisch-deutschen Zentrums für Vergleichende Ordensgeschichte" in Verbindung mit Projekt C "Institutionelle Strukturen religiöser Orden im Mittelalter" und Projekt W "Stadtkultur und Klosterkultur in der mittelalterlichen Lombardei. Institutionelle Wechselwirkung zweier politischer und sozialer Felder" des Sonderforschungsbereichs 537 "Institutionalität und Geschichtlichkeit,"* Dresden, 10.–12. Juni 2004, ed. Giancarlo Andenna. Vita regularis, 26: Abhandlungen (Münster: Lit, 2005).

**20** This is impressively documented in the *Encyclopedia of Medieval Pilgrimage*, ed. Larissa J. Taylor, Leigh Ann Craig, et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010).

**21** John Potts, *A History of Charisma* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); *Charisma und religiöse Gemeinschaften im Mittelalter* (see note 19).



Whereas in the past religiously minded people went on pilgrimages to sacred shrines, whether Santiago de Compostela, Rome, Jerusalem, or Mecca, today they tend to seek out also (or only) the shrines of deceased pop stars or famous athletes. The more authority an individual enjoys, the more his or her subjects, adherents, fans, or supporters believe in his or her absolute power or source of influence. Even the most rational and non-religious people would have to admit that they are aware of a certain extra-human quality in authority figures, or associated with a specific space. Ultimately, investigating what authority might have meant in the Middle Ages will reveal a critical aspect of the commonly shared cultural framework of that society and culture.<sup>22</sup> Basically, we are dealing with a rich and variegated discourse of authority, that is, with competing forces that worked hard to impose their claims on authority and hence to dominate their society.<sup>23</sup> In the world of politics and the conduct of war, authority was of prime importance, affecting both European society internally and the global relationship between Christians and Muslims during the Crusades, not to mention ongoing conflicts with the Jewish population.<sup>24</sup>

There would be many ways of approaching the topic, and one could draw from an infinity of possible sources to deal with the issue at hand. Dante Alighieri's (ca. 1265–1321) *Divina Commedia* immediately comes to mind, and so also the wide range of courtly romances, from Chrétien de Troyes to Thomas Malory (1405–1471), spanning the time from the late twelfth to the late fifteenth century. By the end of the twelfth century Marie de France

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**22** C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma in Art, Literature and Film* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), addresses this topic in a highly interdisciplinary fashion, crossing many centuries, and moving freely from the Middle Ages to the postmodern world.

**23** See the contributions to *Authority & Community in the Middle Ages*, ed. Donald Mowbray, Rhiannon Purdie, and Ian P. Wei (Stroud: Sutton, 1999); to *Aspects of Power and Authority in the Middle Ages*, ed. Brenda Bolton and Christine Meek. *International Medieval Research*, 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); and to *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, ed. Ruth I. Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones. *The New Middle Ages* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

**24** Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Dissent and Order in the Middle Ages: The Search for Legitimate Authority*. *Twayne's Studies in Intellectual and Cultural History*, 3 (New York: Twayne Publishers; New York and London: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992); Christopher Hatch MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*. *The Middle Ages Series* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); see also the contributions to *La notion d'autorité au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident: Colloques internationaux de La Napoule, session des 23–26 octobre 1978*, organized by George Maddisi, Dominique Sourdél, and Janine Sourdél-Thomine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982).

(1145–1198) operated powerfully with claims on authority of her own, later followed by Christine de Pizan (1363–ca. 1430) in the early fifteenth century, fighting back against the pervasive misogyny of her time, thus placing her own authority in contrast to that which her male predecessors had enjoyed for far too long. We could also turn our attention to intellectual giants such as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) or Albertus Magnus (d. 1280), and yet we would not reach any final understanding of authority in the Middle Ages, because there was no agreement on who held the highest rank at that time, excepting only God, of course. Once again, we are dealing with a complex discourse of competing participants, and cannot simply compare one category with another.

For the purpose of these introductory remarks, to discuss what authority could have meant in the high Middle Ages, I will focus on just two major texts from very different backgrounds, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (ca. 1205) and Saint Hildegard of Bingen's (1098–1179) *Scivias*, along with her letters to various individuals. In my own contribution to the present volume I will add a further perspective by studying immensely important and influential texts from the late Middle Ages, Marco Polo's *Travels* (ca. 1300) and John Mandeville's *Travels* (ca. 1340–1360). Altogether I hope to establish a solid framework for the larger issue at hand, bringing together a group of voices that have never been heard together in the context of "authority."

Whereas the first two referred to above sought out their authority mostly within the divine sphere, the other two operated energetically to place themselves in the center of their own writings, regularly insisting on the eye-witness quality of their accounts. What we are encountering here are four different models of authority, two older and two younger, each of them representing, despite numerous similarities, very different individual literary genres and approaches to the critical question at hand.

## Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*

Wolfram von Eschenbach's literary fame rests on his *Parzival* (ca. 1205) and his *Wilhelm*, apart from a fragmentary *Titirel* and some dawn songs.<sup>25</sup> The literary work by this highly respected Middle High German poet (d. ca. 1220) has been studied from a myriad of perspectives, and so also has his use of sources,

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<sup>25</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*. Nach der Ausgabe Karl Lachmanns revidiert und kommentiert von Eberhard Nellmann. Übertragen von Dieter Kühn. Bibliothek des Mittelalters, 8/1 and 2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994). The commentary by Nellmann proves to be extraordinarily helpful.

which still proves to be somewhat unfathomable.<sup>26</sup> Here, however, we have an ideal opportunity to explore a significant approach to authority by a writer who knows how much he is indebted to the literary tradition and yet is fully intent on going his own way, drawing a wide range of registers and deliberately confounding anyone who might want to get on his trail. After all, Wolfram, closely following the model set up by the French poet Chrétien de Troyes in his *Perceval* (ca. 1170–1190), presents the life of the young man Parzival, who is destined to assume the throne of the Grail kingdom. At first he fails in his quest and he subsequently undergoes a long series of trials and tribulations, but ultimately he learns his lesson and is then prepared to ask a crucial question addressed to his ailing uncle Anfortas, who is thus healed and can release the throne to his nephew. The central motif in his *Titurel* consists of an ominous text written on a long dog's leash by means of gems studded into the fabric, which the female protagonist Sigune reads but then loses because the dog runs away—a motif that has no parallels in world literature.<sup>27</sup>

In his *Parzival* Wolfram tells the story of the Grail and how the young hero Parzival slowly develops the mental and spiritual maturity required to take over the role of king from the ailing Anfortas. But Wolfram's genius was not to be content with this single-strand motif, and instead to create an enormously rich tapestry of narrative elements that criss-cross and interact with each other, combining worldly with spiritual, courtly with religious features in a most fascinating and far-reaching manner. But like all medieval writers, Wolfram was most hesitant to claim originality, although it was certainly there in his later *Titurel*; instead, he tried hard at numerous points, as most other medieval authors tended to do, to refer his readers/listeners to his sources, and in this process

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26 For a convenient introduction in English, with solid bibliographies of the primary and secondary material, see Marianne Wynn, "Wolfram von Eschenbach," *German Writers and Works of the High Middle Ages: 1170–1280*, ed. James Hardin and Will Hasty. Dictionary of Literary Biography, 138 (Detroit, Washington, DC, and London: Gale Research, 1994), 185–206. Wolfram's use of Chrétien and other sources was studied as early as 1936, see Bodo Mergell, *Wolfram von Eschenbach und seine französischen Quellen*. 2 vols. Forschungen zur deutschen Sprache und Dichtung (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1936).

27 Albrecht Classen, *Utopie und Logos: Vier Studien zu Wolframs von Eschenbach*. Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte (Heidelberg: Winter, 1990); Robert Braunagel, *Wolframs Sigune: Eine vergleichende Betrachtung der Sigune-Figur und ihrer Ausarbeitung im "Parzival" und "Titurel" des Wolfram von Eschenbach*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 662 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1999); Alexander Sager, *Minne von maeren: On Wolfram's "Titurel."* Transatlantische Studien zu Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit, 2 (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2006). Oddly, despite the wide availability of these studies in relevant research libraries, modern Wolfram scholarship has mostly ignored them, ironically trying to establish its own authority in this regard.

might even have made up one of the most unusual sources of the entire Middle Ages.<sup>28</sup>

Assuring his audience that his narrative epic was based on reliable sources played a significant role in his efforts to gain an authoritative voice. Much ink has been spilled over the last two hundred years to determine whom Wolfram really had in mind, whether it was Chrétien de Troyes, or the mysterious Kyot. Some scholars have also pointed out that he might have been principally influenced by Guiot de Provins, but no consensus has ever been reached, nor does it seem meaningful to pursue that question any further.<sup>29</sup> There are a range of likely Oriental sources, Latin texts, and some French, apart from Chrétien's poems. Chrétien, curiously enough, is mentioned only once by name (827, 1–2), and then even dismissed as an unreliable source, whereas the true authority for the original account about the Grail was supposed to be the above-mentioned Kyot (827, 4), whom he identifies as a Provençal, a converted Jew.<sup>30</sup> Wolfram mentions him repeatedly in *Parzival* (416, 20 ff., 431, 2; 453, 1 ff., 827, 1 ff.), placing considerable importance on this figure, although verification of his existence has proved (so far) to be impossible.<sup>31</sup> However we try to approach the Kyot issue, it will remain an almost unsolvable crux

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**28** D. H. Green, "Oral Poetry and Written Composition: An Aspect of the Feud Between Gottfried and Wolfram," D. H. Green and L. Peter Johnson, *Approaches to Wolfram von Eschenbach: Five Essays*. Mikrokosmos, 5 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1978), 163–264; here 170–73; Christopher Young, *Narrativische Perspektiven in Wolframs "Willehalm": Figuren, Erzähler, Sinngangsprozess*. Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte, 104 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), 122–36. He concludes, addressing *Willehalm* only, but it certainly also applies to *Parzival*, 128: "Durch die ironische Umformuierung verschiedener Topoi zum Thema Wissen und Nicht-Wissen sowie Erzählen-Können und Nicht-Erzählen-Können tritt die Figur des Erzählers hervor, die ihre alleinige Kontrolle über den Gang und die Art des Erzählens immer eindringlicher behauptet."

**29** Jochen Bertheau, *Wolframs von Eschenbach Parzival [sic] und seine französischen Vorlagen: Neue Funde zum Kyot-Problem*. Mannheimer Studien zur Linguistik, Mediävistik und Balkanologie, 17 (Frankfurt a. M.: Haag + Herchen, 2004), offers a rather strange argumentation, extensively reviewing older scholarship, drawing many spurious inferences, and suggesting, ultimately, that Guiot de Provins influenced Wolfram deeply.

**30** See, for instance, Carl Lofmark, "Wolfram's Source References in 'Parzival,'" *Modern Language Review* 67 (1972): 820–44; id., "Zur Interpretation der Kyotstellen im 'Parzival,'" *Wolfram-Studien* 4 (1977): 33–70; Rüdiger Schütz, "Die Echos der Verschwiegenheit: Ein semiotischer Zugang zum Kyotproblem in Wolframs von Eschenbach Parzival," *Osnabrücker Beiträge zur Sprachtheorie* 42 (1990): 168–85.

**31** Joachim Bumke, *Wolfram von Eschenbach*. 8th rev. ed. Sammlung Metzler, 36 (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2004), 244–47. See also Ulrich Ernst, "Kyot und Flegitanis in Wolframs Parzival: Fiktionaler Fundbericht und jüdisch-arabischer Kulturhintergrund," *Wirkendes Wort* 35 (1985): 176–95; Herbert Kolb, "Guido militiae Templi magister," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen* 223 (1986): 337–44.

insofar as the perhaps only playful allusion to Kyot belongs to the heart of Wolfram's literary enterprise predicated on deliberately mystifying references. But what would we truly gain by tracing this enigmatic reference back to an actual Provençal or French author?

Granted, there would be some value in comparing Wolfram's *Parzival* with such an important source. Scholarship has generally argued that Wolfram tried to hide his dependence on Chrétien through the Kyot mask and/or that he aimed to appease his audience's possible concerns regarding the veracity and probability of his text. We could also imagine that Wolfram deliberately played a literary game here and hoped that his audience would recognize the artificiality of a source that bordered on the ridiculous. Joachim Bumke goes so far as to suggest that the play with Kyot as a source belongs to the fictional fabric of *Parzival* and correlates the poet's own struggle to learn the truth about his life with his protagonist's endeavors to find the Grail.<sup>32</sup> Overall, however, at present the only reasonable perspective we can pursue would be to investigate how Wolfram played with and achieved authority by means of citing Kyot.<sup>33</sup> Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens rightly emphasize in this regard, "the Text presupposes an ongoing, unfinished *working* of language in which, since reading and writing are inseparable, the reader's interpretation cannot be completely subordinated to or determined by the Author's intentions."<sup>34</sup> In other words, the search for sources achieves only so much, and if pursued too far, loses sight of the authority of the text itself.

Shortly before we hear of Kyot the first time, the narrator indicates how much he desires to gain recognition for his work.<sup>35</sup> But then Wolfram introduces the elusive man from Provence, whom he identifies as a sorcerer, "Kyôt la schantiure,"<sup>36</sup> whose art as a writer quite apart from his necromantic skills, helps many people to gain joy and insight.<sup>37</sup> In other words, Kyot stands out as a uniquely empowered individual who commands access to secret knowledge of the greatest importance. The account of *Parzival* used by Kyot was originally written in Arabic ("heidensch," 416, 27) and then

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32 Bumke, *Wolfram von Eschenbach* (see note 31), 247.

33 Gertrud Grünkorn, *Die Fiktionalität des höfischen Romans um 1200*. Philologische Studien und Quellen, 129 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1994).

34 Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens, "Introduction," *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover, NH, and London: University Press of New England, 1989), 1–19; here 2.

35 Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 416, 1.

36 "Kyôt laschantiure hiez," Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 416, 21. All the translations from the German are mine.

37 Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 416, 23–24.

translated into French (not Provençal, i.e., Occitan!). Wolfram emphasizes that he could read that version, thereby claiming the status of a linguistic authority.<sup>38</sup> However, he does not simply operate as a translator; instead he indicates that he had personal contacts with Kyot and seems to have discussed the text with him: “Kyot asked me to keep it a secret.”<sup>39</sup>

Apparently, as we learn, the story of the Grail represents a secret of the greatest importance that should not be divulged so easily to ordinary people. Yet, despite the shroud of a sacrosanct account Wolfram knows only too well that it needs to be divulged, precisely because of its fundamental importance for all people: “one has to speak about it.”<sup>40</sup> In order to underscore the extraordinary relevance, the narrator mentions that Kyot discovered the text in a Toledo archive or library, written in Arabic,<sup>41</sup> which he then had translated into French. But *Parzival*, or the story of the Grail, is not simply an entertaining account; instead it carries religious importance, because only a true Christian would be able to gain a grasp of its meaning. We may assume that Kyot used to be a Jew, since he had converted to Christianity, “it helped that he had been baptized; otherwise we would not have learned anything about this story.”<sup>42</sup> Wolfram acknowledges the central part Arabic culture played in the discovery of this report about the Grail, but he also affirms, in the same breath, “no heathen cunning could have been of use to learn about the nature of the Grail.”<sup>43</sup>

Only then do we learn about the origin of Kyot’s text, which he had found in Toledo—he had not written it himself, he had merely translated it, serving as a mediator of arcane knowledge! The true discoverer of the Grail had been the Syrian Flegetânīs, a descendent of King Solomon, and hence a member of the Jewish faith: “originated from the Israelite tribe.”<sup>44</sup> Wolfram leaves us in no doubt as to his contempt for those who adhere to the old, pre-Christian faith, insofar as baptism created the only safeguard, or shield, against the horrors of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 416, 28–29.

<sup>39</sup> “Mich batez helen Kyôt,” Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 453, 5.

<sup>40</sup> “Daz man dervon doch sprechen muoz,” Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 453, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 453, 11–19.

<sup>42</sup> “Ez half daz im der touf was bî: / anders wær diz mæc noch unvernumn,” Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 453, 18–19.

<sup>43</sup> “Kein heidensch list möht uns gefrumn / ze künden umbes grâles art,” Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 453, 20–21.

<sup>44</sup> “Ûz israhêlscher sippe erzilt,” Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 453, 27.

Hell.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, Flegetânîs had been privileged, to the great surprise of the narrator, to learn the greatest secrets in the stars. Here we finally learn the origin of the Grail myth: “he said that there was such a thing as the Grail. He read of its name without doubt in the stars. A bevy of angels brought it down to earth.”<sup>46</sup>

The narrator subsequently comments that Flegetânîs wrote about this miracle, which later must have become known through obscure channels, but only in fragments, since Kyot then began to search for the original story.<sup>47</sup> At first he was not successful, although he rummaged through many chronicles in Britain, France and Ireland. Only in Anjou—an imaginary Wolframian kingdom—did he finally come across the original story, almost in the same way that Joseph Smith had received the *Book of Mormon* as a gift from angels in the early nineteenth century, and then published it in 1830.<sup>48</sup> Of course, all this proves to be a fictional strategy, which allows Wolfram to reconnect everything to his protagonist Parzival, and so he can finally return to his own account.<sup>49</sup> Can we therefore claim that Wolfram used Kyot only as a thinly veiled stand-in for himself, the most learned and highly authorized author?

In the last reference to Kyot, Wolfram re-emphasizes how much the master from Provence can be credited with having sent the true story to Germany, like a religious missive of the highest authority: “the true story has been sent.”<sup>50</sup> This then brings about, as he points out, the end of the “âventiur” (827, 11), which could mean both “the romance” as well as “the adventure,” or more properly, the quest itself. After all, the narrator announces himself: “I do no longer want to talk about,”<sup>51</sup> because everything has been said about

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45 Ibid., 453, 28–29.

46 “Er jach, ez hiez ein dinc der grâl: / des namen las er sunder twâl / inme gestirne, wie der hiez. / ein schar in ûf der erden liez,” Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 453, 28.

47 “Diz mære begunde suochen,” ibid., 455, 2.

48 Albrecht Classen, “Reading, Writing, and Learning in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*,” *A Companion to Wolfram’s Parzival*, ed. Will Hasty. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1999), 189–202. In that study I reach the following conclusion, which I would like to repeat here for obvious reasons, 201: “True readers are the only ones who can, according to Wolfram, reach the grail, achieve salvation ... .” For the *Book of Mormon*, see:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book\\_of\\_Mormon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Mormon) (last accessed on June 18, 2012).

49 Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Lachmann and Nellmann (see note 25), 455, 23ff.

50 “Diu rehten mære uns sint gesant,” ibid., 827, 10.

51 “Riht mêt dâ von nu sprechen wil,” ibid., 827, 12.



Parzival's life and the miracle has been achieved in him to combine both God's grace and worldly honor.<sup>52</sup>

Wolfram places Kyot ahead of him, but he really speaks through him and thus assumes highest authority himself because his romance of Parzival and the Grail illuminates the fundamental path all human beings should take. Wolfram speaks with the voice of a priest, or rather, as one of the *vates*, endowed with prophetic, divine knowledge, imbued with arcane knowledge, learned through his personal contacts with Kyot's work, and through him with the text which the Syrian Flegetânîs had discovered in the stars, the greatest mystery of all mankind.

Ultimately, Wolfram claims that there is meaning in life, that Parzival has found the path toward that goal, and that the literary representation of that quest constitutes the fulfillment of the ancient dream of mankind. Although Wolfram does not resort to a clerical discourse, he certainly assumes the posture of one who speaks *ex cathedra*. Both Kyot and Flegetânîs, but not Chrétien, support his authority in this matter.<sup>53</sup> Carl Lofmark already recognized the crucial function of the Kyot reference, enabling Wolfram to express his pride in his accomplishment with this romance.<sup>54</sup> Here we can take one further step and recognize Kyot as the literary catalyst for Wolfram to establish the highest possible authority a lay writer could claim in the Middle Ages.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 827, 21–24.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Young, *Narrativische Perspektiven* (see note 28), 185–87, examines the question of how Wolfram handled the role of the narrator in the *Willehalm*, and observes, quite insightfully, 186: “Diese Instanz [of the author/narrator] manipuliert verschiedene Topoi der Buchgelehrsamkeit und der historiographie, um ihre eigene Subjektivität zu entfalten. Diese Subjektivität ist zwar ohne die Erfindung der Fiktionalität nicht denkbar, bedeutet aber nicht, daß Wolfram sein Werk als fiktional verstanden wissen wollte. Vielmehr dient diese ‘fiktionale’ Subjektivität der Erzählerinstanz dazu, den Erzähler eine Stimme finden zu lassen, die denen der Figuren gewachsen ist.” We can apply this to our topic and add that Wolfram does not only establish most self-consciously his own subjectivity, but also his supreme authority as a *magister ludi*, as the one who understands, through Parzival, how to find the Grail, the goal of all life.

<sup>54</sup> Lofmark, “Zur Interpretation der Kyotstellen” (see note 30), 69.

<sup>55</sup> Albrecht Classen, “Noch einmal zu Wolframs ‘spekulativer’ Kyô Quelle im Licht jüdischer Kultur und Philosophie des zwölften Jahrhunderts,” *Studi medievali* Ser. 3. 46.1 (2005): 281–308.



## Hildegard of Bingen

Much has already been said about the extraordinary work of the German mystic Saint Hildegard of Bingen, so here we can limit ourselves to a few remarks that will highlight the unique and yet powerful approach to authority assumed by this most remarkable twelfth-century female intellectual and mystic. The way medieval women—sometimes also men—reached out to the Godhead or, rather, were overwhelmed by His approach to them, reveals a variety of strategies. While Margery Kempe (ca. 1373–ca. 1440) resorted mostly to crying in an excessive, but also moving, way to convey her religious sentiments and experiences in her more or less autobiographical *Book*,<sup>56</sup> Hildegard relied heavily on classical epistolary writings, learned treatises, and visionary revelations, all in Latin, and so resorted to intimate components of the learned canon. Despite the enormous discrepancy between these two women, we must not ignore the enormous impact which Margery's crying had on her environment. In fact, her seemingly endless flow of tears provided her with an astounding source of authority, as vexing as it obviously was for her social environment.<sup>57</sup> Hildegard began her career as a nine-year old recluse at the Disibodenberg convent south of Mainz, Germany, but in 1147/1150 she left that institution and founded her own monastery on the Rupertusberg near Bingen, and in 1165 a daughter convent in Eibingen nearby. Not only did she write many important theological tracts and medical, gynecological treatises, hymns, and other texts, but, most importantly, also reflected at great length on her mystical visions, especially in her *Scivias* (Know Thy Ways).

Mystics often employed letters to communicate with the outside world about their spiritual experiences, other examples being Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373) and Catherine of Siena (1347–1380). Curiously, although representatives of a marginal vocation, these mystics all seemed to have taken an important place in medieval society; by means of their religious visions they successfully transcended their traditional gender limits and were able to leave their social constraints behind.

Hildegard knew exceedingly well how to utilize the epistolary genre to establish her own authority, drawing on traditional humility topoi, resorting to a wide arrange of learned strategies in composing her letters, and deliberately reconfirming her male addressees' authority, thus intriguingly creating a space

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<sup>56</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. B. A. Windeatt (London: Penguin, 1985).

<sup>57</sup> Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe*. Studies in Medieval Mysticism (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004).

for herself. In her letter of 1146 to Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153), for instance, she skillfully blends profound expressions of admiration for his worldly honor and religious esteem: “you are held wonderfully in high honor by the power of God. You are a terror to the unlawful foolishness of the world; you burn in the love of God’s son; you are eager to win men for the banner of the Holy Cross to fight wars in the Christian army against the fury of the pagans.”<sup>58</sup> But then she immediately turns to her own concern and formulates her question regarding how to explain and interpret a vision that she had had.

She knows it was neither an illusion nor something she might have seen with her physical eyes. Instead she is completely sure of its nature, and confirms this without any hesitation, “I who am miserable and more than miserable in my womanly existence have seen great wonders since I was a child. And my tongue could not express them, if God’s Spirit did not teach me to believe.”<sup>59</sup> Hildegard submits herself to Bernard’s authority, especially, as she says, because she is nothing but a modest woman, unworthy, or so it seems at first, to be privy to God’s divine grace. But then she comes forth with her boldest possible claim, promulgating that she had been privileged by God to understand the Holy Scripture through her vision: “For in the text I know the inner meaning of the exposition of the Psalter and the Gospel and other books shown to me in this vision, which touches my heart and soul like a consuming fire, teaching me these profundities of exposition.”<sup>60</sup>

Hildegard clearly recognizes what behooves her in Bernard’s eyes, and she plays with his male expectations almost coquettishly, admitting: “I am a person ignorant of all teaching in external matters,” yet then adds, most curiously: “I

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**58** For the English translation, see *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*. Trans. with an introd. and notes by Mark Atherton (London: Penguin, 2001), 3. For the Latin original, see Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. L. van Acker. 2 vols. *Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Medaevalis* 91 and 91 A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991): “qui mirabiliter in magnis honoribus uirtutis Dei ualde metuendus es illicite stultitie huius mundi, uexillo sancte crucis cum excelso studio in ardenti amore Filii Dei capiens homines ad bella pugnanda in christiana militia contra paganorum seuitiam.”

**59** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 3; Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. van Acker (see note 58): “Ego, misera et plus quam misera in nomine femineo, ab infantia mea uidi magna mirabilia, que lingua mea non potest proferre, nisi quod me docuit Spiritus Dei, ut credam.”

**60** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 4; Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. van Acker (see note 58), 4: “Scio enim in textu interiorum intelligentiam expositionis Psalterii et Euangelii et aliorum uoluminum, que monstrantur mihi de hac uisione, que tangit pectus meum et animam sicut flamma comburens, docens me hec profunda expositionis.”

am taught inwardly, in my soul. Therefore I speak as one in doubt.”<sup>61</sup> Knowing exceedingly well that she, as a female mystic, would never be able to establish her own authority in the patriarchal society of her world, she appeals to Bernard: “I want you to reassure me, and then I will be certain!”<sup>62</sup> She explicitly defers to his authority, asking him to decide whether she should speak out in public about her visions or not. Nevertheless, she is completely self-assured that these visions represent a “gift” which might empower her to overcome the root problem of all people, who are trapped in their material natures. Now, because of the vision, she perceives the unique chance to cast her own human limitations aside and to gain freedom, being lifted up by the Godhead Himself: “But now I raise myself up, I run to you, I speak to you.”<sup>63</sup> Without undermining or threatening Bernard, she subtly begins to claim her own authority and outlines how much power has been granted to her through that vision.

If we wonder where she might have drawn her strength to argue so powerfully regarding her newfound spiritual authority, we only need to turn to some sections in her *Scivias*, where she explains: “And I, a human being, neither ablaze with the strength of strong lions nor learned in their exhalations, remaining in the fragility of the weaker rib, but filled with mystical inspiration, saw: a shining fire, unfathomable, inextinguishable, fully alive and existing full of life.”<sup>64</sup> When she tried to learn more about the nature of her vision, she was instructed by a voice: “Of this mystery you may not see any more than is granted you through the miracle of belief.”<sup>65</sup> Knowing only too well how the male authorities in the Church would vehemently oppose her as God’s mouthpiece, she strategically positions herself over and over again as the weak woman dependent on

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**61** Hildegard of Bingen, *Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 4; Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. van Acker (see note 58), 4: “... quia homo sum indocta de ulla magistratione cum exteriori material ... sed intus in anima mea sum docta. Vnde loquor quasi dubit.”

**62** Hildegard of Bingen, *Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 4; Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. van Acker (see note 58), 4: “Volo ... ut me consoleris, et certa ero.”

**63** Hildegard of Bingen, *Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 4; Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. van Acker (see note 58), 5: “Nunc autem surgens curro ad te. Ego dico tibi.”

**64** Hildegard of Bingen, *Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 9; Hildegardis Scivias, ed. Adelgundis Führkötter in collaboration with Angela Carlevaris. *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis*, 43 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), 110: “Et Ego homo non calens in forma fortium leonum nec docta exspiratione illorum, sed manens in mollitie fragilis costae imbuta mystico spiramine, uidi quasi lucidissimum ignem in comprehensibilem, inexistinguibilem, totum uiuentem, totumque uitam existentem.”

**65** Hildegard of Bingen, *Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 10; Hildegardis Scivias, ed. Führkötter (see note 64), 111: “De hoc mysterio nonpoteris quidquam amplius uidere nisi ut tibi propter miraculum credendi conceditur.”

the help of the male learned clerics in order to comprehend what has happened to her. In fact, even the mystical voice resorts to that strategy: “Insignificant earthly creature! Though as a woman you are uneducated in any doctrine of fleshly teachers in order to read writings with the understanding of the philosophers, nevertheless you are touched by my light, which touches your inner being with fire like the burning sun.”<sup>66</sup> Having taken the metaphorical wind out of the sails of possible male detractors, Hildegard then quotes the voice as saying: “Do not be afraid, but tell the mysteries as you understand them in the spirit, as I speak them through you. May they be ashamed who should be showing righteousness to my people.”<sup>67</sup>

Removing any doubt as to the meaning of the vision here, she relates the further words: “The ‘shining fire’ which you see represents the omnipotent living God, whose light-filled brightness is never obscured by any evil. He remains ‘unfathomable’, because he cannot be divided by any divisions, and he is without beginning or end, not to be comprehended by any glimmer of creaturely knowledge.”<sup>68</sup> This proves to be an amazing swipe at all male theologians, who endeavor with all their strength and intellect to grasp the meaning of God, without knowing that they are attempting the impossible because of the very nature of God. Hildegard, on the other hand, is graced with this extraordinary understanding—not knowledge!—through the vision, which actually grants her the highest possible authority on earth, superseding all members of the clergy, including the pope. As Hildegard insists, through the mystical vision, all people share the divine nature of the Godhead, but most people have forgotten this essential secret: “Human creature! You are a wholeness in every

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<sup>66</sup> *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 10–11; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64), 111: “O quae es misera terra et in nomine femineo indocta de ulla doctrina carnalium magistrorum, scilicet legere litteras per intellegentiam philosophorum, sed tantum tacta lumine meo, quod tangit te interius cum incendio ut ardens sol.”

<sup>67</sup> *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 11; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64), 112: “Noli ergo esse timida, sed dic ea quae intellegis in spiritu, quemadmodum ea loquor per te, quatenus illi uerecundiam habeant.”

<sup>68</sup> *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 11; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64), 112: “Nam ille lucidissimus ignis quem uides designat omnipotentem et uiuentem Deum, qui in clarissima serenitate sua numquam ulla iniquitate offuscatus est, incomprehensibilis manens; quia nulla diuisione potest diuidi, aut initio aut fine, aut ulla scintilla scientiae creaturae suae comprehendendi sicuti est.”

created thing and yet you forget your creator! All things subject to you obey their creator as they were made to.”<sup>69</sup>

The vision itself revealed to Hildegard, as she is instructed, God’s word: “the whole of creation was roused by him and grew incandescent when the Word became incarnate in the dawn and brilliance of maidenhood, so that from the Word all the virtues and powers flowed in the knowledge of God when humanity came back to life in the salvation of souls.”<sup>70</sup>

Authority has much to do with knowledge, with being privy to the highest or deepest secrets, as we have already observed in Wolfram’s approach in his *Parzival*. Hildegard simply goes one step further and claims God’s authority for herself, because He gave it to her as His gift. Hildegard demonstrates this authority through her visions, in which she learned all the secrets of divine creation, which she retells in her *Scivias*. As much as she deliberately humbled herself all the time, she dared to pontificate as God’s own voice and thus address the world as God’s earthly representative. She embraces that authority and explains to her readers the meaning of darkness and light, and that of the light-filled man and other features contained in her vision: “This signifies God’s Word, incarnate inviolately in the glory of unstained maidenhood, and born without pain, but nevertheless not separated from the Father.”<sup>71</sup> In fact, Hildegard’s account transforms into a medium for God to make his plan and to make his decisions known to man: “And therefore I will redeem from the punishment of hell the souls of those who love me and worship me; that is, the souls of the saints and the souls of the just ...”<sup>72</sup>

Having gained that level of authority, the mystic felt no hesitation in extending her teachings, that is, her spiritual enlightenment, to others as well, as in her letter of 1148 to Odo of Soissons: “Listen now: a king sat on his throne, high pillars before him splendidly adorned and set on pediments of

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**69** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 12; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64), 113: “O homo, tu totum es in omni creatura et obliuisceris creatoris tui, et subiectio tua oboedit ei sicut ei constitutum est.”

**70** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 13; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64), 115: “omnis creatura suscitata est et quasi incanduit, cum in aurora et candore uirginitatis incarnatum est, ita quod ex eo stillauerunt omnes uirtutes in agnitione Dei, cum homo reuixit in animarum saluatione.”

**71** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 17; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64), 119: “hoc designat Dei Verbum in candore intemeratae uirginitatis inuiolabiliter incarnatum et sine dolore natum, nec tamen a Patre separatum.”

**72** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 18–19; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64), 18–19: “Et ideo animas illorum qui me diligunt et qui me colunt scilicet animas sanctorum et animas iustorum ab infernali poena redimam.”

ivory ... And I say to you: I heard from a certain man fluent in doctrine who asked me whether or not the paternity of the high Father and the divinity of God were identical with God.”<sup>73</sup> Moreover, she felt bold enough to enjoin this man of high authority to listen to her urging words and to follow them because God was speaking through her: “Now, O man, listen again to the poor little form of a woman speaking to you in the Spirit: God wants you to make straight your paths and to be subject to him so that you may be a living rock in the cornerstone. In this way you will not be separated from the tree of life.”<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, the more we enter into Hildegard’s writings, the more we recognize in her the voice of a teacher who holds the highest possible authority: “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the time of affliction comes and before the years approach of which you will say: ... .”<sup>75</sup> Or: “Therefore, O human creature, embrace your God thus in the lights of your vigor, before the hour arrives for the purgation of your deeds, when all things will be revealed and nothing will remain unconsidered.”<sup>76</sup>

A final example from Hildegard’s letter to Pope Eugenius III (r. 1145–1153) from ca. 1151 will suffice to illustrate the spiritually powerful position that she had gained in the meantime. Of course, she still identifies herself as “a small and insignificant figure” (31), but she immediately refers to her own visionary authority and admonishes him not to forget how much God Himself is speaking through her: “Now that a part of this writing [*Scivias*] is finished, still the same Light has not left me but burns in my soul as I have had it since childhood. Therefore I send you now this letter in the true admonition of

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<sup>73</sup> *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 21–22; Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. van Acker (see note 58), 103–04: “Rex in solio suo sedit et magnas columnas et ualde elegantes in magnis ornamentis coram se statuit, que supra ornamenta eboris erecta sunt ... Et dico tibi: A quodam homine in doctrina fluente et me interrogante audiui quod paternitas summi Patris et diuinitas Dei non esset Deus.”

<sup>74</sup> *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 22; Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. van Acker (see note 58), 105: “Nunc iterum audi, o homoi, pauperulam formam in Spiritu tibi dicentem: Deus uult ut recta itinera facias et ut illi subiectus sis et ut etiam uiuus lapis sis in lapide angulari. Et de ligno uite non deleberis.”

<sup>75</sup> *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 29; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64) II, 9, 131: “Memento creatoris tui in diebus iuuentutis tuae, antequam veniat tempus afflictionis et appropinquent anni de quibus dicas.”

<sup>76</sup> *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 29; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64) II, 9, 131: “Vnde, o homo, sic amplectere Deum tuum in lumine uigoris tui, priusquam ueniat hora purgationis operum tuorum, cum omnia manifestabuntur, nec quidquam neglectum relinquetur.”

God.”<sup>77</sup> In fact, the visionary experience has elevated her to the highest possible position of authority, so she dares to say to Eugenius: “And my soul desires that the Light from the Light will shine within you and pour over your eyes and awaken your spirit to these writings so that your soul may be crowned by them, as God so wishes.”<sup>78</sup>

This does not mean that Hildegard was free from any doubts about herself, or free from fear and uncertainty. In *Scivias* she also comments, for instance, “Where am I in my exile? In the shadow of death. What is this path I am walking on? The path of error. And what comfort do I have? The comfort of pilgrims.”<sup>79</sup> But then she jubilantly turns all this inner weakness aside and regains the glorious position of the mystically empowered soul: “For I am the living breath which God breathed into the dry dust of the earth. And so I was to know God and to feel God.”<sup>80</sup> However, this seems to last only for the blink of an eye, as Hildegard then describes how she tumbled back down to the worst experiences of mortification and humiliation the human soul can ever go through: “May Heaven hear my cry! May the Earth tremble at my misery and all that live on her have pity for my captivity! I am oppressed by bitter pains, for I am a pilgrim without comfort or support.”<sup>81</sup> Despite all vexations and terrifying challenges, ultimately we hear from Hildegard: “It was then that I heard my mother’s voice speaking to me, ‘Run, my daughter, run, for you have been granted wings to fly with by the great Giver whom none can resist. Quickly, therefore, fly over all these creatures opposing you.’ And then, with a

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**77** Letter to Pope Eugenius III (1148), *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 31; Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. van Acker (see note 58), 7: “Nunc finita est pars scripture huius, sed tamen eadem lux non reliquit me, sed in anima mea ardet sicut eam ab infantia mea habui. Vnde nunc mitto tibi litteras istas in uera admonitione Dei.”

**78** Letter to Pope Eugenius III (1148), *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 31; Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarivm*, ed. van Acker (see note 58), 7–8: “Et anima mea desiderat, ut lumen de lumine in te luceat, et puros oculos tibi infundat et spiritum tuum exsuscitet ad opus scripture istius, quatenus anima tua inde coronetur, quod Deo placet” (7–8).

**79** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 41; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64) I, 4, 1, 62: “Ego peregrina ubi sum? In umbra mortis. Et qua uia eo? In uia erroris. Et quam consolationem habeo? Quam peregrini habent.”

**80** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 42; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64) I, 4, 1, 62: “quia sum uiuens spiraculum quod Deus misit in aridum limum. Vnde deberem Deum scire et ipsum sentire.”

**81** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 42; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64) I, 4, 1, 63: “Caelum ergo clamorem meum exaudiat et terra de maerore meo tremiscat ac omne quod uiuit ad captiuitatem meam se miserando inclinet, quia amarissimus dolor me premit, quoniam sine consolatione et sine adiutorio peregrina sum.”



great feeling of comfort and release, I took up my wings and flew quickly over those venomous and death-dealing vipers.”<sup>82</sup>

Hildegard magisterially operated with the two extreme positions of humility and authority, the first consistently serving as the foil for her attempt to gain the full authority to speak as a mystic. We can wonderfully perceive in her various texts the complexity of the discourse of authority, vacillating between full confidence and complete mortification and self-humiliation. Ultimately, however, insofar as Hildegard was always forced to refer to the divine voice speaking in and through her, she gained an enormous position of influence. The one significant parallel to Wolfram’s strategy with Kyot consists in the realization of both how much the play with external sources could contribute dialectically to the establishment of the own voice as the source of ultimate authority here on earth.<sup>83</sup>

## Conclusion

As different as these two were in their approach to their roles as writers, their narrative style, the topics they dealt with, and the textual genre they resorted to, they were similar in their overarching interest in coming to terms with the question of authority, claiming for themselves that they were fully entitled to promulgate the truth of their texts. Whereas Wolfram used a kind of literary mask (Kyot) to play out his own mastership as the creator of his romance, Hildegard humbly deferred to God who spoke to and through her. However,

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**82** *Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings*, trans. Atherton (see note 58), 44; *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. Führkötter (see note 64) I, 4, 1, 66: “Tunc uocem matris meae audiui mihi dicentem. ‘O filia, curre, pennae enim ad uolandum tibi datae sunt a fortissimo datore, cui nullus resistere ualet. Ergo uelociter transuola omnes has contrarietates.’ Et ego multa consolatione confortata pennas illas suscepi et omnia uenenosa ac mortifera illa uelociter transuolaui.”

**83** There is much secondary literature on Hildegard: see, for instance, the contributions to *Hildegard of Bingen: A Book of Essays*, ed. Maud Burnett McInerney. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, 2037 (New York and London: Garland, 1998); *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of Her Thought and Art*, ed. Charles Burnett and Peter Dronke. Warburg Institute Colloquia, 4 (London: Warburg Institute, 1998); Eduard Gronau, *Hildegard von Bingen, 1098–1179: Prophetische Lehrerin der Kirche an der Schwelle und am Ende der Neuzeit*. 2nd ed. (Stein am Rhein: Christiana-Verlag, 1991); Christian Feldmann, *Hildegard von Bingen: Nonne und Genie* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1991); *Hildegard von Bingen: Prophetin durch die Zeiten. Zum 900. Geburtstag*, ed. Edeltraud Forster (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1997); “Im Angesicht Gottes suche der Mensch sich selbst”: *Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179)*, ed. Rainer Berndt. *Erudiri sapientia*, 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001); *The Voice of Silence: Women’s Literacy in a Men’s Church*, ed. Thérèse de Hemptinne and María Eugénia Góngora. *Medieval Church Studies*, 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).



she also proved to be remarkably self-conscious and perceived herself as God's mouthpiece, which, after all, attributed to her a considerable degree of importance. Virtually all mystical authors subscribed to that ideal, and the more they endeavored to minimize themselves to emphasize God's voice, the more they gained true authority. The issue of authority was of seminal importance in the Middle Ages and determined many different discourses, both at court and within the Church. If there was no trustworthy source, or authority, poets like Wolfram made sure that they projected one. The individual, whether poet or mystic, relies on solid authority structures in order to work out his or her orientation and status in this and the other world. At the same time, by way of referring to a subliminal authority, God or an imaginary poet from the past, these writers established their own authority and become much more recognizable for us today than many of their contemporaries.

Overall, as we can conclude, in the shadow of the daunting cathedrals throughout medieval Europe, the discourse of authority became highly contested and gave way to the rise of literary individuality and self-consciousness. We have not even touched upon the philosophical and theological discourse, where that contest assumed even more intensive dimensions. Although the Church had been quite successful in maintaining its vastly dominating position in this regard until the High Middle Ages,<sup>84</sup> the desire for authority among the laity proved to be overarching, giving way to a plethora of different voices.

Voices competing for the highest public recognition, challenging their readers'/listeners' credulity, embarking on new areas of experience—mystical, spiritual, or cultural-geographic—and facing off with each other, so to speak. In light of the work by the two writers discussed here, we suddenly recognize that an enormous cacophony of voices dominated life in the Middle Ages, much more than previously assumed. We are not only dealing with a multiplicity of opinions, but even more so with a broad, highly diversified, and often rather contradictory competition for authority beyond the pale of the Church.

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<sup>84</sup> *Reform and Authority in the Medieval and Reformation Church* (see note 7); *Plenitude of Power: the Doctrines and Exercise of Authority in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Robert Louis Benson*, ed. Robert C. Figueira. Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). See also Régine Pernoud, *Kirche und Macht im Mittelalter: Frauen und Männer, die ein Jahrtausend prägten*. Trans. Sybille A. Rott-Illfeld (Vienna: Tosa, 2004); *The Bishop Reformed: Studies of Episcopal Power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. John S. Ott and Anna Trumbore Jones. Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

Ultimately, this would lead to the rise of the Protestant Reformation in the early sixteenth century. But we do not need to go so far in this regard to comprehend why medieval society really laid the foundations from which the modern world would rise. The contest for authority raged already in the twelfth century within secular and mystical literature, continuing on its own terms, an old struggle of the early Middle Ages between paganism and the Christian Church. However, by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries new voices arose, staking their claims in a previously highly hierarchical and patriarchal field, thus destabilizing the traditional central religious power. The contest for authority continued full steam, and to assume that the medieval world was characterized by some kind of homogenous and solidified authority structure would be to ignore the huge variety of competing forces and voices, some of which I have examined in this introduction.

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## **Authority and the Church**



Maijastina Kahlos

# **“But Our Customs are Older”: The Authority of Antiquity in Late Antique Debates (in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries C.E.)**

## **Introduction: “Older Is Better”**

In the Greco-Roman thought-world, the past played a fundamental role in creating the symbolism of power and the authority of antiquity was rarely questioned. Antiquity, it was argued, affirmed the validity of a religious tradition or a single ritual.<sup>1</sup> In Roman society, in which tradition and the ancestral customs (*mos maiorum*) were emphatically prominent, the new had to be clothed as the old, or the return to the old, as Emperor Augustus’s (63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) program of “renovation” shows.<sup>2</sup> The antiquity of religious and mythic traditions heightened their power and prestige, since it was believed that, for something to be true it had to be primeval.<sup>3</sup> For instance, the first-century Roman historian Tacitus (ca. 56–ca. 117) remarked of Jewish religious practices: “These rites, whatever their origins, are sanctioned by their antiquity.” Thus the only vindication for Judaism was the antiquity of Jewish worship. Similarly, in the dialogue *Octavius* composed by the second-century Christian writer Minucius Felix, the polytheist interlocutor of the dialogue, Caecilius, depicts his Greco-Roman religion as “so old, so useful, so

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1 The argument “older is better” is attested in Greek literature from the fifth-century BCE philosopher Timaeus of Locri onwards, Peter Pilhofer, *Presbyteron kreitton. Der Alterbeweis der jüdischen und christlichen Apologeten und seine Vorgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 18.

2 For Augustus’s program, see Achatz von Müller and Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg, “Das Alte als Maske des Neuen: Augustus und Cosimo de’ Medici,” *Die Wahrnehmung des Neuen in Antike und Renaissance*, ed. Achatz von Müller and Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg. Colloquium Rauricum, 8 (Munich: Saur, 2004), 68–89.

3 Frances Young, “Greek Apologists of the Second Century,” *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 81–104; here 93–94.

beneficent” (“tam vetustam, tam utilem, tam salubrem”), and argues that age has sanctified the Roman shrines and ceremonies.<sup>4</sup>

The argument of antiquity is bluntly expressed in Emperor Diocletian’s (244–311) decree against Manicheans (of 297 or 302), who “institute new and unheard-of sects in opposition to more ancient religions.” The decree proclaims that the ancient religion should not be criticized by a new one and explains: “For it is the greatest crime to re-examine what has been fixed and defined by the ancients and what holds and possesses its own position and course.”<sup>5</sup>

In the manner of the Manicheans, Christians as newcomers had to face this challenge of the great prestige of the past. From the second century to the early fifth century, Christian writers report Greek and Roman criticism in which Christianity was disparaged as a new-found religion and therefore as lacking all the authority and justification of antiquity. Moreover, their writings were recent and thus Christians had no authority for their doctrines.<sup>6</sup> For example, an early fourth-century writer, Arnobius of Sicca (d. ca. 330), reports Romans who claimed that “our customs are more ancient” (“antiquiora ... nostra sunt”), and “therefore more deserving of belief, and the most credible and trustworthy” (“fidei et veritatis plenissima”).<sup>7</sup> In the early fourth century, Lactantius (ca. 250/60–ca. 325) writes about the Greco-Roman mockery of recent Christian writings, whereas Homeric works were considered worthy of respect because of their great

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4 “Hi ritus quoquo modo inducti antiquitate defenduntur,” Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.5, Tacite, *Histoires*, ed. Henri Goelzer (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1921), 296; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 8; 6.3, M. Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, ed. Bernhard Kytzler (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1993), 22, 20.

5 *Mosaicarum et Romanarum legum collatio* 15.3, *Fontes Iuris Romanae antejustiniani* II, ed. S. Riccobono, J. Baviera, and J. Furlani (Firenze: Barbèra 1968), 580–81; Translation by Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 281–82. Cf. Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 39.18.7, Livy, *Book 39 (liber XXXIX)*, ed. P. G. Walsh (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1994), 633–34, who disapproves of Bacchanalia as a novelty.

6 E.g., according to a late second-century Platonist, Celsus (in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.29; 1.31; 1.38; 1.46; 1.57, Origène, *Contre Celse livres I et II*, ed. Marcel Borret. Sources chrétiennes, 132 [Paris: Cerf, 1967], 154, 160, 182, 196, 233), as a new-found religion Christianity lacked the approval of antiquity, especially because Christians had no authority for their doctrines. For the dispute over the novelty of Christianity, see Michel Fédou, *Christianisme et religions païennes dans le Contre Celse d’Origène* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988), 504–14.

7 “Sed antiquiora, inquit, nostra sunt ac per hoc fidei et veritatis plenissima,” Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 1.57, Arnobe, *Contre les gentils*, ed. Henri Le Bonniec (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982), 183. For Arnobius, see Mark Edwards, “The Flowering of Latin Apologetic: Lactantius and Arnobius,” *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 197–221; here 217.

age.<sup>8</sup> As late as the fourth century, a Greek rhetorician, Libanius (ca. 314–ca. 394), stated that Christ (that is, Christianity) had no sanction of antiquity.<sup>9</sup>

The antiquity of a religion was regarded not only as the criterion of truth, but also as that of morality. Therefore, Christians had to counter accusations of the abandonment of ancestral customs, whether they were Greco-Roman or Jewish customs. In the early fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 263–339) reported slanders according to which Christians were blasphemous (*dyssebeis*) atheists (*atheoi*) who had abandoned the ancestral divinities through which all peoples and cities had organized themselves.<sup>10</sup> In their rejection of both Greco-Roman and Jewish religious tradition, Christians were double offenders and deserters. Emperor Julian (r. 360–363) charged Christians with both abandoning their ancestral tradition (*apolipontes de ta patria*) and fabricating novelties (*kainotomias*).<sup>11</sup>

How were these accusations countered by Late Antique Christian writers? In the following discussion, I examine the dispute over the authoritative tradition between Christians and polytheists in the fourth and fifth centuries. Here authority is understood not merely as political or economical power, but also as symbolic power that influences people's behavior. Authoritative tradition is used to justify the beliefs and customs of religious, ethnic or social groups. In order to authorize their religious inclination, Christian authors could either question the reverence for antiquity or make use of it. I will show with a few examples how both methods were employed—sometimes even by the same writer. Arnobius both refutes the idea of the authority of antiquity and makes claims for the antiquity of the Christian tradition. This twofold method illustrates

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**8** Lactantius, *Institutiones divinae* 4.5, Lactance, *Institutions divines livre II*, ed. Pierre Monat. Sources chrétiennes, 337 (Paris: Cerf, 1987).

**9** Libanius, *Oratio* 13.12, in Libanius, *Selected Orations* I, ed. A. F. Norman. The Loeb Classical Library 451 (London: Heinemann, 1969), 67. See the discussion in Ugo Criscuolo, "Aspetti della resistenza ellenica dell'ultimo Libanio," *Pagani e cristiani da Giuliano l'Apostata al sacco di Roma*: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Rende 12–13 novembre 1993, ed. Franca Ela Consolino. Studi di Filologia Antica e Moderna, 1 (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1995), 85–103; here 90.

**10** The passage is usually attributed to the Platonic philosopher Porphyry of Tyre (ca. 230–ca. 305), in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 1.2.1–2, Eusèbe de Césarée, *La préparation évangélique livre I*, ed. Jean Sirinelli and Édouard des Places. Sources chrétiennes, 206 (Paris: Cerf, 1974), 104.

**11** Julian, *Contra Galilaeos* 238B, also 238D, *The Works of the Emperor Julian* III, ed. W. C. Wright. Loeb Classical Library, 157 (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 388, 390, and passim, accusing Christians of blasphemy, abandonment of tradition and vulgarity.

the ever-present tension between tradition and innovation—the double identity of early Christianity.<sup>12</sup> Finally I observe the invention of tradition in the more general perspective of the use of history.

## Questioning and Refuting the Authority of Antiquity

Arnobius replies to the above-mentioned vilification by Roman polytheists (*antiquiora nostra sunt*), by contrasting the old and the new. For Arnobius, the new is positive because it is more reliable than the age-old. He implies that “antiquity is the most fertile mother of errors” (*errorum ... antiquitas plenissima mater*). He asks whether falsehoods could not have been both spoken and believed ten thousand years ago. There is less invention in matters of recent occurrence than in those of ancient obscurity.<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, Arnobius’s contemporary Lactantius criticizes the persistence of Romans in their ancestral customs. They are completely uncritical because they do not consider the nature of their customs. Instead, they are assured of the excellence and truth of their customs because the ancients have handed them down. Lactantius exclaims, “so great is the authority of antiquity that it is said to be a crime to inquire into it.” Therefore it is believed as ascertained truth everywhere.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Lactantius writes that the people of the past were not superior (*sapientia ... antecesserunt*) in wisdom just because “they preceded us in time” (*temporibus antecesserunt*). Lactantius states that

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<sup>12</sup> For the emphasis on the new chosen people in Christian apologetic writings, see Markus Bockmuehl, “Jewish and Christian Public Ethics in the Early Roman Empire,” *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 342–55; here 352.

<sup>13</sup> “Sed antiquiora, inquit, nostra sunt ac per hoc fidei et ueritatis plenissima; quasi vero errorum non antiquitas plenissima mater sit et non ipsa pepererit res eas quae turpissimas diis notas ignominiosis concinnauerunt in fabulis. Ante milia enim annorum decem non potuerunt falsa et audiri et credi aut non simillimum veri est fidem vicinis et finitimis quam spatiorum inesse longinquitate distantibus? Testibus enim haec, illa opinionibus adseruntur et proclivius multo est minus esse in recentibus fictionis quam in antiqua obscuritate summotis,” Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 1.574–6, ed. Le Bonniec (see note 7), 183.

<sup>14</sup> “Tantaque est auctoritas vetustatis ut inquirere in eam scelus esse ducatur.” Lactantius, *Institutiones divinae* 2.6, ed. Monat (see note 8), 90.



people who uncritically approve the inventions of their ancestors are like sheep led by others.<sup>15</sup>

Thus the old is associated with error while the new is the true piety. For Eusebius of Caesarea, Christianity represents progress: Christianity is morally superior to polytheism.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the early fifth-century poet Prudentius questions the validity of the Roman tradition, stressing repeatedly the stupidity and ignorance of the forefathers.<sup>17</sup> He calls the Roman tradition the "image of false piety" (*falsae pietatis imago*) and "nebulous error" (*nebuloso errore*).<sup>18</sup>

## Accepting and Applying the Authority of Antiquity

The recognition of the authority of antiquity was nonetheless more widespread and significant in Christian literature than the questioning and refutation. In order to convince their audience, Christian writers had to move according to the cultural rules set in Greco-Roman society. Being the foster children of the Greco-Roman world, Christian intellectuals, in the words of Guy G. Stroumsa, "could not really refuse to 'play the game.'" Because the validity of religious beliefs, customs and writings was commonly measured by their antiquity, Christian intellectuals laid claims to the antiquity of Christianity, consciously representing their religion as the carrier of culture and as the most ancient tradition of all, much more ancient than Greek and Roman traditions.<sup>19</sup>

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15 "... Qui sine ullo iudicio inventa maiorum probant et ab aliis pecudum more ducuntur," Lactantius, *Institutiones divinae* 2.7, ed. Monat (see note 8), 94.

16 Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 4.16.1, Eusèbe de Césarée, *La préparation évangélique livres IV–V, 1–17*, ed. Odile Zink and Édouard des Places. Sources chrétiennes, 262 (Paris: Cerf, 1979), 162–98. For the idea of progress in Christianity, see Wolfram Kinzig, "The Idea of progress in the Early Church until the Age of Constantine," *Studia Patristica* 24 (1993): 119–34; id., *Die Idee des Fortschritts in der Alten Kirche bis Eusebius*. Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, 58 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994).

17 Prudentius, *Contra orationem Symmachi* 1.73; 1.79–80; 1.99; 1.146; 1.153; 1.155, *Prudentius with an English Translation* I, ed. H. J. Thompson. The Loeb Classical Library, 387 (London: Heinemann; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 354, 356, 360, 362.

18 Prudentius, *Contra orationem Symmachi* 1.154–155, ed. Thompson (see note 17), 362. Cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 27.4, Tertullien, *Apologetique*, ed. Jean-Pierre Waltzing (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), 170, who writes positively on Christians as newcomers, people from just yesterday; the anonymous *Ad Diognetum* 1.1, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, ed. Andreas Lindemann and Henning Paulsen (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 306, depicts the novelty of Christianity positively.

19 Guy G. Stroumsa, "The Christian Hermeneutical Revolution and its Double Helix," *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World*, ed. L. V. Rutgers et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 9–28; here 26.

Therefore, in these disputes Greco-Roman and Christian writers stood on opposite sides, but they both regarded themselves as defenders of tradition and authority. Both agreed on the premise that for something to be true, it had to be ancient. What was under dispute was whose religious tradition was the oldest and consequently most prestigious and authoritative.

Only a few denied the significance that the past had in creating the symbolism of power. Lactantius and Arnobius, who questioned the reverence for antiquity, were nonetheless prone to utilize the argument of antiquity, simply overturning the Greek and Roman charges of novelty. In their turn, Christian writers labeled Greco-Roman religions as new and argued that Christianity was primeval. Arnobius argued that the Roman paternal customs such as incense and sacred flour were actually quite recent.<sup>20</sup> As regards innovations, Arnobius states that there is an important distinction between capricious innovations and changes brought about by the omnipotent will of God, that is, a distinction between human and divine innovations. He writes, “if what happens today had been necessary a thousand years ago, the supreme Ruler would have done it.”<sup>21</sup> The works of the supreme God are done “according to fixed reasons” and, Arnobius stresses, “what once is decreed to happen cannot be changed by any innovation.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, a late fourth-century writer, the so-called Ambrosiaster, makes a counter-attack against aristocratic polytheists, who are to be regarded as the “creators and defenders of new things” (“*novarum rerum auctores et defensores*”) rather than Christians.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, in the internecine rivalry between Christians, anteriority in time was regarded as a sign of dogmatic superiority.<sup>24</sup> Each group represented itself as the true heirs of the apostolic heritage, while competing groups such

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Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 63, points out that Christian authors strikingly echo the strategies and presuppositions of earlier Jewish, Greek, and Egyptian historiographers.

<sup>20</sup> Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 6.26, *Arnobii Adversus nationes libri VII*, ed. C. Marchesi (Torino: Paravia, 1953), 340.

<sup>21</sup> “Si quod hodie factum est, ante milia fieri potuisset annorum, fecisset istud rex summus,” Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 2.75, ed. Marchesi 155 (see note 20).

<sup>22</sup> “Rationibus fixis peraguntur res eius et quod semel decretum est fieri nulla potest novitate mutari,” Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 2.75, ed. Marchesi 155 (see note 20).

<sup>23</sup> *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti* 114.1, ed. Alexander Souter. *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 50 (Vienna and Leipzig: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1908), 303.

<sup>24</sup> J.-C. Fredouille, “Tertullien dans l’histoire de l’apologetique,” *Les Apologistes chrétiens et la culture grecque*, ed. Bernard Pouderon and Joseph Doré (Paris: Beauchesne, 1998), 271–81; here 239.

as Montanists were labeled as newcomers.<sup>25</sup> The teaching of the mainstream church was justified by antiquity: in the words of the fifth-century bishop Vincent of Lérins (d. ca. 445): “Also in the Catholic Church itself we take care that we hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, by all ... And we shall observe this rule if we follow universality, antiquity, consent.”<sup>26</sup>

## Inventing Christian Antiquity

How was Christianity furnished with age-old authority and wisdom? Christian writers set out to collect evidence from Jewish, Greek, and Roman philosophers, poets, and historians in order to show that Christianity rested on tradition. They laid claim to the past, making the precedent history and tradition a prehistory of Christianity.<sup>27</sup> Modern scholars speak of the adaptation of history and the reinvention of history in terms of Christian typology, as well as the shaping of a coherent inherited tradition, a kind of “Christian Heritage Source-Pack.”<sup>28</sup>

In the early fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea argued for the originality and antiquity of Christianity, stating that because Christianity was identical with the religion of the Hebrew patriarchs, it was much older than Judaism. Greek religion was merely a recent falsification, a distortion and plagiarism of

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<sup>25</sup> Montanists were charged with [inventing] novelties: Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 8.19.2; Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.16.4; 5.16.10, Eusèbe de Césarée, *Histoire ecclésiastique livres V-VII*, ed. Gustave Bardy. Sources chrétiennes, 41 (Paris: Cerf, 1955), 47, 49; Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 95.

<sup>26</sup> “In ipsa item catholica ecclesia magnopere curandum est ut id teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum, quod ipsa vis nominis ratioque declarat, quae omnia fere universaliter comprehendit. Sed hoc ita demum fiet, si sequamur universitatem, antiquitatem, consensionem,” Vincentius Lerinensis, *Commonitorium excerpta* 2.5–6, ed. R. Demeleunaere. Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 64 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 149; Translation by James Stevenson in, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church A.D. 337–461* (London: SPCK, 1966), 299. For a discussion, see Rachel Moriarty, “The Faith of Our Fathers: The Making of the Early Christian Past,” *The Church Retrospective*, ed. R. N. Swanson. Studies in Church History, 33 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), 5–17; here 8–9.

<sup>27</sup> Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 121, writes of “the capacity of the great Christian preachers and writers to accommodate themselves to the modes of discourse that already prevailed, and thereby almost to take their audience by stealth, in particular by laying claim to past history.”

<sup>28</sup> Moriarty, “The Faith” (see note 26), 6.

the religion of Hebrews. The Greeks had derived their wisdom from the Hebrews because the erudition of Greek philosophers had originated from Moses and the prophets. Eusebius' argumentation was connected to the above-mentioned charges, according to which Christians had abandoned both the Greek and the Jewish tradition. Thus, he overturned the charge, arguing that Christians were the true heirs of the original tradition, which Greeks had plagiarized and distorted.<sup>29</sup> In Eusebius' analysis of religious history, the earliest humans had embraced the true religion but this had been distorted into the varieties of "pagan" religion and superstition. Finally, in the wake of Christianity, the original true old religion was returned to humankind.<sup>30</sup> This is rhetoric of restoration: what is seen as innovation by outsiders is argued to be the restored truth.<sup>31</sup>

Lactantius has a similar vision of religious history: the true original religion of the true God was established among the Hebrews and other religions were alienated and distorted versions. Those who moved away from amongst the Hebrews to inhabit the whole world were "torn away from the stem of their sacred root." They established new customs and institutions as they saw fit. Thus, Lactantius asserts, those who claimed that the cult of the gods originated from the beginning of the world and was prior to the religion of God—Christianity—were mistaken.<sup>32</sup> For Christian writers, it was imperative to demonstrate that Christianity was anterior in time to both the Greek and Jewish tradition. This is why the chronologies of universal histories emerged

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<sup>29</sup> E.g., Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica* 7.1.79; 8.3.10, Eusebius, *Werke* 7, ed. Ivar A. Heikel. Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, 23 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913), 310–12, 393. For Eusebius, see T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 181–86. For the construction of the dependency between Moses and Greek tradition, see Daniel Ridings, *The Attic Moses: The Dependency Theme in Some Early Christian Writers. Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgiensia*, 59 (Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1994), and A. J. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie*, 26 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989).

<sup>30</sup> Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 2.5; 7.2; also 10.8.1–16 (Greeks had plagiarized their wisdom from barbarians), Eusèbe de Césarée, *La préparation évangélique livres II-III*, ed. Édouard des Places. Sources chrétiennes, 228 (Paris: Cerf, 1978), 102–06. Cf. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 1.21–53, Théodoret de Cyr, *Thérapeutique des maladies Helléniques livres I-VI*, ed. Pierre Canivet. Sources chrétiennes, 57.1 (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 107–19.

<sup>31</sup> Buell, *Why This New Race* (see note 19), 70, compares this rhetoric of restoration to the language of restoration in which Augustan innovations were clothed.

<sup>32</sup> Lactantius, *Institutiones divinae* 2.14, ed. Monat (see note 8), 184.

as an important genre in the writings of second- and third-century apologists and fourth- and fifth-century Christian historians.<sup>33</sup>

In this struggle over the priority of past wisdom, the charges of plagiarism, falsification and distortion were used as weapons by rival religious groups, in disputes both between polytheists and Christians and between different Christian groups.<sup>34</sup> For instance, Greco-Roman writers claimed that there was nothing new in Christianity, which had merely plagiarized its teachings from old honored classical sources. And vice versa: Christian apologists in their turn claimed that Greeks had borrowed their learning from older Jewish writers or, in more general terms, from barbarian wisdom ("barbarian" understood here in a positive sense).<sup>35</sup> Some Christian writers, Eusebius of Caesarea and Theodoret of Cyrhus (ca. 393–ca. 457) among them, even spoke about theft: Greek poets and philosophers had stolen their teachings from the sacred Scriptures.<sup>36</sup>

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33 E.g., Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 3.26 (Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum*, ed. Robert M. Grant [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970], 138), stresses that "our sacred scriptures are proved to be more ancient and more true than the writings of Greeks and Egyptians or any other historiographers." Tatian, *Oratio adversus Graecos* 29, 31, 35–41, *Tatiani oratio ad Graecos*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 55, 57, 66–74, insisted that Christian philosophy is far older than Greek philosophy and Moses older than Homer. Enrico Norelli, "La critique du pluralisme grec dans le *Discours aux Grecs* de Tatien," *Les Apologues chrétiens et la culture grecque*, ed. Bernard Pouderon and Joseph Doré (Paris: Beauchesne, 1998), 81–120. For the chronological argument, see Guy G. Stroumsa, "Philosophy of the Barbarians: On Early Christian Ethnological Representations," *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 339–68; here 350. E.g., in the third-century Julius Africanus (*Chronographiae*) developed a chronology to prove the anteriority of Christian teaching.

34 The charge of plagiarism is often called *die Diebstahlsthese* and *la théorie du plagiat* in modern research. For the complicated history of plagiarism and imitation, see Ridings, *Attic Moses* (see note 29), 12–13, who uses the term "the dependency theme."

35 Christian writers tied together Greek theories of a *theologia perennis*, an original foundation of all legitimate religions, and the ideas of Jewish apologists according to whom Moses and the prophets were the source for the Greek wisdom, see Monique Alexandre, "Apologétique judéo-hellénistique et premières apologies chrétiennes," *Les Apologues chrétiens et la culture grecque*, ed. Bernard Pouderon and Joseph Doré (Paris: Beauchesne, 1998), 1–40; here 28–31. For "Barbarian wisdom," see Gillian Clark, "Translate into Greek: Porphyry on the New Barbarians," *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, ed. Richard Miles (London: Routledge, 1999), 112–32; here 122–23, and Stroumsa, "Philosophy" (see note 33), 345.

36 "... The Hellenes have stolen everything, even the philosophical doctrines found in their acclaimed philosophers as well as the common goods from which community life benefits," Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 7.1.3, also 7.18.11, Eusèbe de Césarée, *La préparation évangélique livre VII*, ed. Guy Schroeder and Édouard des Places. Sources chrétiennes, 215 (Paris: Cerf,

Plato was integrated as part of the “Heritage Source-Pack”: a number of Christian writers stated that Plato had been Moses’ disciple or had used Moses as his source.<sup>37</sup> According to an anonymous third- or fourth-century writer, Plato learned much from Moses but was afraid to name Moses as his source and reveal all that he knew because he feared to suffer the fate of Socrates.<sup>38</sup> In *City of God* Augustine of Hippo (354–430) discusses the dependence of Plato on Hebrew prophets such as Jeremiah, but remains cautious because of chronological problems. He nonetheless does not exclude the possibility that Plato could have heard teachings from the sacred Scriptures.<sup>39</sup> The idea of Plato as a disciple of Moses or Hebrew prophets was connected to the great dispute over the heritage of Plato. To whom did Plato belong and who were the true Platonists? Both Christian and polytheist writers fought hard over

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1975), 146, 262; also 10.2.1–15; Eusèbe de Césarée, *La préparation évangélique livres VIII-IX-X*, ed. Guy Schroeder and Édouard des Places. Sources chrétiennes, 369 (Paris: Cerf, 1991), 352–58; Trans. by Ridings, *Attic Moses* (see note 29), 150. Theodoret of Cyrrihus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 6.31, ed. Canivet (see note 30), 265, states that Plato stole from the prophets such as Isaiah and Ezekiel. The idea of theft is also found in earlier apologists, e.g., Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 1.14, ed. Grant (see note 33), 18; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.87.2–3, who claims that the Greeks were the thieves of philosophy (*kleptai tes filosofias*), Clément d’Alexandrie, *Les stromates*, ed. Claude Mondésert and Marcel Caster. Sources Chrétiennes, 30 (Paris: Cerf, 1951), 113.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.66.3, ed. Mondésert and Caster (see note 36); Justin, *1, Apology*, 44, 54, 59–60, *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 94–95, 108–09, 115–16.

<sup>38</sup> Pseudo-Justin, *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 22, 27, Pseudo-Justin, *Ouvrages apologétiques*, ed. Bernard Poudéron. Sources chrétiennes, 528 (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 202–04, 224. The writer is identified as a fourth-century Bishop Marcellus of Ancyra by Christoph Riedweg, *Ps.-Justin (Markell von Ankyra?): Ad Graecos de vera religione (bisher ‘Cohortatio ad Graecos’)*. Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft, 25 (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1994).

<sup>39</sup> In his *De civitate Dei* 8.11, Augustine is almost convinced that Plato cannot have been unacquainted with the sacred Scriptures. Augustinus, *De civitate Dei libri XXII*, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993), 337. In *De doctrina Christiana* 2.28.43, Augustine was more confident, asserting that Platonists were imbued with knowledge from “our,” that is, the Hebrew Scriptures, rather than that Jesus learned from the Platonic writings. Sant’Agostino, *L’istruzione Cristiana*, ed. Manlio Simonetti (Milano: Mondadori, 2000), 138; Therese Fuhrer, “Die Platoniker und die civitas dei (Buch VIII-X),” *Augustinus: De civitate dei*, ed. Christoph Horn (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 87–108; here 90–91; Elizabeth Clark, “Creating Foundations, Creating Authorities: Reading Practices and Christian Identities,” *Religious Identity and the Problem of Historical Foundation: The Foundational Character of Authoritative Sources in the History of Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Judith Frishman, Willemien Otten, and Gerard Rouwhorst (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 553–72; here 569.

Plato and both sides accused the other of counterfeiting the heritage of Platonism.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion: Inventing Tradition

In order to respond to the charges of novelty, unoriginality, plagiarism, distortion and apostasy, Christian writers adapted the argument of antiquity and counter-attacked by turning against pagan Greeks and Romans. To be able to launch this counter-assault, they had to construct an alternative view of history and an alternative chronology, composing an *interpretatio Christiana* of the history of humankind.<sup>41</sup>

The appeals of Christian writers to the more or less fabricated antiquity of their tradition are part of the justificatory rhetoric of religious, ethnic and philosophical groups in the Greco-Roman world. Neoplatonists, for instance, respected the ancient “barbarian” wisdom, especially Egyptian, Chaldean, and even Jewish learning, as long as they felt they could harmonize them with Plato.<sup>42</sup> Polytheistic and Christian writers alike shared the confidence that true doctrine was primeval while novelties lacked authority; thus, novelties could only be degenerated and distorted versions of the old and true doctrine. This argument was applied in the disputes not only between polytheists and Christians, but also between Jews and Christians, as well as between Christian groups.

Christian writers used the past to suggest a more complete control of the present and the future. We can speak not only of the conquest of culture by Christianity in late antiquity but of the conquest of the past. Polytheist and Christian writers struggled with each other for authority to interpret the past. Neither side

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**40** E.g., Eusebius and Theodoret of Cyrrhus depicted Greeks as illegitimate heirs and Christians as legitimate heirs of Plato. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 10.8.17–18, ed. Schroeder and des Places (see note 36), 410–12; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 1.14–15; 2.33–42, ed. Canivet (see note 30), 107, 147–50. See also Ridings, *Attic Moses* (see note 19), 147–58, 203–05. Greco-Roman writers saw Christianity as a plagiarized and distorted Platonism, and such slanders are reported by Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 2, ed. Marchesi (see note 20). Augustine mentions that Ambrose of Milan in a lost work attacked Neoplatonists who portrayed Christianity as a counterfeit Platonism. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 2.28.43 (see note 39).

**41** For the development of Christian universal histories, see Hervé Inglebert, *Interpretatio Christiana: Les mutations des savoirs (cosmographie, géographie, ethnographie, histoire) dans l'Antiquité chrétienne 30–630 après J.-C.* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2001), 464–533.

**42** Clark, “Translate into Greek” (see note 35), 122–23.



challenged the authority of antiquity and the (more or less) old scriptures. The only thing they could achieve was to seize the past and make claims for it.<sup>43</sup>

Late antiquity was the era of the birth of the great Christian narrative. In their “invention of tradition”—to use Eric Hobsbawm’s term—redating and relocating of past histories, ideas, persons and scriptures, late antique Christians were by no means alone.<sup>44</sup> One need only recall the mythical pasts of Greek city-states, the Trojan ancestry of the Romans or the construction of Jewish antiquity. Here I interpret traditions and histories as mobile constructions that produce and recast rather than describe collective identities. All claims for the past are therefore to be understood both as “fictive”—meaning that they are all constructions—and as “real”—meaning that those who are involved regard them as reality.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cameron, *Rhetoric of Empire* (see note 27), 122, 138; R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine*. Wiles Lectures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 131, writes: “Christians and pagans were alike schoolmen: they could not challenge the authority of the ancient texts; they could only evade it by reading back their own thoughts into them.”

<sup>44</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983), 1–14; here 1: “The term ‘invented tradition’ ... includes both ‘traditions’ actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period”; “‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.” See also Willemien Otten and Theo Salemink, “Prologue: Religious Identity and the Problem of Historical Foundation. The Foundational Character of Authoritative Texts and Traditions in the History of Christianity,” *Religious Identity and the Problem of Historical Foundation: The Foundational Character of Authoritative Sources in the History of Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Judith Frishman, Willemien Otten, and Gerard Rouwhorst. Jewish and Christian Perspectives, 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3–27; here 4.

<sup>45</sup> For the discussion of identity and history, see Buell, *Why This New Race* (see note 19), 70, 62, 69, and Lieu, *Christian Identity* (see note 25), 62–97.



Ken Grant

# A Divine Mandate: Pope Gregory VII's Defense of Papal Authority

## Introduction

Pope Gregory VII's papacy (1073–1085) and the reform program that frequently bears his name are widely regarded as critical developments in the medieval period.<sup>1</sup> The reform movement of the mid to late eleventh century sought to extirpate the heresies of simony, clerical marriage (or nicolaitism), and lay investiture. For Pope Gregory VII, the central issue, encompassing the specifics of the cessation of these canonical abuses, was the need to create *libertas ecclesiae*, the freedom of the Church. I. S. Robinson notes that, “Gregory VII's own interpretation of his actions was that he sought to restore the imperial Church to its original liberty and purity, by freeing it from ‘the will of impious men’ and the ‘wicked custom of this world’—that is, from royal dominance.”<sup>2</sup> In order to create this freedom, Gregory articulated a revolutionary position regarding the relationship between *sacerdotium* and *regnum*. Gerhart Ladner details the organizing principle of Gregory's ideology:

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1 The historiography on the papacy of the Gregory VII and the reform movement that often bears his name is rich and varied. Central to the ongoing debate is discussion as to whether Gregory's activities were revolutionary or conservative, with noted historians Gerhart Ladner in a series of articles to be found in the collection *Images and Ideas in the Middle Ages* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1983) and Augustine Fliche, *La Réforme Grégorienne. Histoire de l'Église, depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*, 8 (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1946)), arguing that Gregory was a conservative or traditionalist, while Gerd Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1940, 1959); Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution c. 970–1215* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); I. S. Robinson, *The Papacy 1073–1198: Continuity and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); id., *Authority and Resistance in the Investiture Contest: The Polemical Literature of the Late Eleventh Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978); Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); and H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Pope Gregory VII 1073–1085* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), all argue for Gregory as a revolutionary figure, forever altering the medieval landscape and the relationship between religious and temporal leaders with his actions in the contest with Henry IV.

2 Robinson, *Authority and Resistance in the Investiture Contest* (see note 1), 5.

It is then hardly possible to exaggerate the significance of the far-reaching alteration that took place in the relationship between Church and State during the Gregorian age. From then on, the whole problem was entirely changed. The question was no longer who was supreme in the Church, Pope or ruler, but rather who was superior in Christendom: the Church under the Pope or the kingdoms.<sup>3</sup>

As pope, Gregory VII argued for and attempted to act upon this startlingly innovative approach to the conceptualization and exercise of authority. This article explores the idea of authority in the Middle Ages through the lens of Pope Gregory VII's understanding and defense of authority. Gregory articulates an understanding of authority that places the Church in the position of dictating all that should happen in both the spiritual and temporal realms. Gregory's argument is based on the assumption that the two realms are not equal, and that the spiritual realm always remains preeminent, due completely to the authority of Christ and those who were appointed to act in his stead, most notably, St. Peter and his successors. Gregory's greatest concern, in regarding authority, "was the religious origin and validity of papal authority."<sup>4</sup>

In order to justify and legitimize his understanding of authority, Gregory drew heavily from Scripture and the Church Fathers to provide the necessary evidence for his claims. To help explicate Gregory's conceptualization and use of his understanding of authority, I will offer not only a general introduction to Gregory's methodology and appeal to the Scriptural origin of his understanding of authority, but also will provide a close reading of Gregory's second letter to Bishop Hermann of Metz (episcopacy 1072–1090) in order to provide the best example of his reasoning on authority. This letter is the most developed of Gregory's explorations on the subject of authority and provides a thorough and patient examination of the defense of his ideology.

## Gregory and Scriptural Authority

Gregory developed his understanding of authority through the use of the Church Fathers, and Scripture, especially his connection to St. Peter and the Prophets of the Old Testament. Throughout the *Register*, his only extant work (a collection of his correspondence entered in the Vatican archives as *Registrum Vaticanum II*),

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<sup>3</sup> Ladner, *Images and Ideas in the Middle Ages* (see note 1), 492.

<sup>4</sup> Gerd Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Centuries*. Trans. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 187.

and the main source for this article, Gregory consistently and regularly declared his actions as being directed and legitimized by those whose authority and legitimacy could not be questioned. In the letters it is clear that Gregory recognized in himself a “total identification with St. Peter,”<sup>5</sup> and that this “mystical identification with Saint Peter”<sup>6</sup> created in him “the unshakable conviction of the pope’s right and duty to intervene at all levels of Christian society,”<sup>7</sup> as the duly recognized successor to the see of St. Peter.

Gregory’s understanding and exercise of authority is built on a foundation of three central pillars: the Old Testament Prophets, the Church Fathers, and most especially St. Peter. The first is developed through the frequent citation of the Prophets in the letters of the Register. Gregory understood his ascension to the papal see as a divine mandate.<sup>8</sup> This mandate is clearly elucidated by Gregory in a 1 July 1073 letter to the “Faithful of St. Peter,” warning them of the excommunicated and simoniac Archbishop, Godfrey of Milan (ep. 1070–1075). As he transitions into the body of the letter after a brief, standard greeting, Gregory reiterates a common theme in his letters, his compulsion to act, in this case, a compulsion driven by the Prophets:

I want you to know, most beloved brothers, what many of you do, indeed, know—that we have been set in such a station that, whether we wish to or not, we are under constraint to announce truth and righteousness to all peoples, especially to Christians ...<sup>9</sup>

He then provides the scriptural basis for this compulsion to act, which includes three passages that are regularly used throughout the Register: Isaiah 58:1, Ezekiel 3:18, and Jeremiah 48:10, respectively:

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5 Brenda Bolton, “Papal Italy,” *Italy in the Central Middle Ages 1000–1300*, ed. David Abulafia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 83.

6 Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy* (see note 1), 117.

7 Kathleen Cushing, *Reform and Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 78.

8 Christian Schneider, *Prophetisches Sacerdotium und Heilsgeschichtliches Regnum im Dialog 1073–1077. Münstersche Mittelalterschriften*, 9 (Munich: Willhelm Fink Verlag, 1972).

9 H. E. J. Cowdrey, *The Register of Pope Gregory VII 1073–1085: An English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 16; Erich Caspar, *Das Register Gregors VII. Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae Selectae, Tomus II, fasciculus I-II* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1920–1923), 23: “Scire vos volo, fratres karissimi, quod et multi vestrum sciunt, quia in eo loco positi sumus, ut velimus nolimus omnibus gentibus, maxime christianis, veritatem et iustitiam annuntiare compellamur dicente ...” I will be drawing on Cowdrey’s translation of the Register into English for quoted passages. In conjunction with the Cowdrey citations, I will also offer the corresponding citations from Caspar’s *Das Register Gregors VII*.

... As the Lord says, “Cry, do not cease, lift up your voice as a trumpet and announce to my people their offences;” and elsewhere, “If you shall not announce to the wicked man his wickedness, I shall require his soul from your hand.” Again, the prophet says, “Cursed is the man who withholds his sword from blood,” that is, the work of preaching from the reproof of the carnal.<sup>10</sup>

The Ezekiel passage is especially noteworthy as it reveals Gregory’s self-understanding as pope and prophet. The context of the passage in Ezekiel 3:18 (and repeated verbatim in Ezekiel 33:8—references to both are made in the *Register*)<sup>11</sup> is worth mentioning in light of Gregory’s sense of the mandate, as the verse is in the midst of the call narrative for the prophet to take the role of sentinel for Israel. The context for Ezekiel 33:8 is equally as illuminating as it is placed in the midst of a lamentation over Egypt. Both contexts are meaningful in light of Gregory’s use and his own situation; the call of the prophet/sentinel mirrors Gregory’s own ascension to the Holy See, and the lamentation over Egypt echoes his own concern for the current state of the Church and world.<sup>12</sup> In both cases the prophet is to act as God’s eyes, ears and mouth, watching and warning of God’s punishment on those who would continue to

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**10** *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 16; *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 24: “‘Clama, ne cesses; quasi tuba exalta vocem tuam et annuntia populo meo scelera eorum’; et alibi: ‘Si non annuntiaveris iniquo iniquitatem suam, animam eius de manu tua requiram’; item propheta: ‘Maledictus’, inquit, ‘homo, qui prohibet gladium suum sanguine’, id est verbum predicationis a carnalium increpatione.”

**11** “If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand,” Ezekiel 3:18, Revised Standard Version. “If I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand,” Ezekiel 33:8, Revised Standard Version.

**12** Gregory’s sense of urgency is noted most clearly in a letter to the “Faithful of St. Peter” in late February 1076, a letter that accompanied the official record of the Lenten Synod of 1076, wherein Henry IV was excommunicated and deposed. Gregory writes: “You have heard, brothers, the novel and unheard-of presumption, you have heard the atrocious loquacity and boldness of schismatics and blasphemers of the name of the Lord in blessed Peter, you have heard the pride which has reared up to the insult and shame of the holy and apostolic see, *such as your fathers have not any time seen or heard nor does the sequence of things written teach that the like has ever come forth from pagans and heretics*,” (emphasis mine) *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 182; “Audistis, fratres, novam et inauditam presumptionem, audistis sceleratam scismaticorum et nomen Domini in beato Petro blasphemantium garrulitatem et audaciam, audistis superbiam ad iniuriam et contumeliam sanctę et apostolicę sedis elatam, qualem vestri patres nec viderunt nec audierunt unquam nec scripturarum series aliquando a paganis vel hereticis docet emersam.” *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 254–55.

defy the law of God. Gregory acts because he believes that “his actions were merely an expression of the will of God.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, for those who would be true to the faith, it was necessary to defer to Gregory’s demands. As Gregory recognized the Church as the body of Christ, a body which included all component parts of the broader Christian society, and that the pope governed the body, the pope therefore governed over all of society. Walter Ullmann develops this idea further by commenting that, “the pope is the common father and master of all Christians—‘communis pater et dominus’—and therefore his authority cannot be subject to any restrictions.”<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the Register Gregory continually reinforces the reality that the only way in which both spiritual and temporal rulers can truly show due deference to the Holy See is to show unwavering obedience. Gregory cites I Samuel 15:23,<sup>15</sup> the second most often cited biblical passage in the Register, to develop his case for strict adherence to his commands.<sup>16</sup> This use, exemplified in Gregory’s first letter to Bishop Hermann of Metz on 15 August 1076, a letter addressing Hermann’s initial questions about the propriety of the first excommunication and deposition of Henry IV (1050–1106) and whether or not those who associated with Henry would likewise share in his excommunication, speaks to the central issue of obedience, commenting that, “For when they proudly resist to obey the apostolic see, as Samuel is witness they fall into the crime of idolatry.”<sup>17</sup>

In using the prophets, Gregory explores his own motivation while explaining why the Church must act. Legitimacy is sought through the repetitive use of the Scripture, the various passages acting cumulatively to build a case for action that was regarded as appropriate. The invocation of the Jeremiah 48:10 passage,<sup>18</sup> a passage which tends to draw the lion’s share of attention and fanfare when Gregory’s use of Scripture is commented upon, is appropriated directly from the twenty-fifth chapter of third part of Pope Gregory I’s (ca. 540–604) *Regula Pastoralis*. This reference to Pope Gregory I directs our attention to Gregory

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<sup>13</sup> Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe* (see note 4), 237.

<sup>14</sup> Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1953), 277.

<sup>15</sup> “For rebellion is as the sin of divination and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry,” 1 Samuel 15:23, Revised Standard Version.

<sup>16</sup> The first is Matthew 16:16–19, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 210.

<sup>18</sup> “Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord with slackness; and cursed is he who keeps back his sword from bloodshed,” Jeremiah 48:10, Revised Standard Version.

VII's appeal to and utilization of the Church Fathers in strengthening the legitimacy of his claims.

Gregory VII references patristic and conciliar sources on one hundred and seventeen occasions in the Register, of these, sixty-two are references to works by Pope Gregory I. Gregory's references to Pope Leo I (ca. 391 or 400–461), Pope Gregory I, and Pope Gelasius I (d. 496) were offered to insure that his readers were reminded of the canonical precedents for his actions and demands. Edward Peters summarizes the importance and influence of these sources for medieval audiences:

The *patres* came to be understood as having possessed the authority—as heirs and interpreters of the apostolic tradition (*paradosis*)—to be expound the rules of Christian life and the norms of the interpretation of scripture.<sup>19</sup>

The final pillar of Gregory's foundation is the most familiar, the use of Matthew 16:16–19. The core of the text is Christ's action of giving the power and authority of binding and loosing, the power of the keys, to Peter, who then passes, according to the popes, that power and authority to his successors. The conclusion to be drawn was clear; the pope's ability to act was directly authorized by Christ's declaration. "Rome was *prima sedes*, 'the first see': the threshold of the apostle Peter, to whose care the nascent Church had been committed by the Lord himself in words familiar to the faithful (Matt 16, 18–9; John 21, 15–7) whose guardianship guaranteed the inerrancy of the Catholic faith (Luke 22, 31–2)."<sup>20</sup> While the Petrine texts were read in the Carolingian period as giving the power of the keys to all bishops, the reforming popes, and specifically Gregory VII, read them in the Roman tradition, which focused on Peter "as the *princeps apostolorum* and of his see Rome as the 'head of all the churches'."<sup>21</sup> I. S. Robinson locates all prophetic and apostolic authority in the Holy Spirit, noting:

Just as the prophets and apostles owed the revelation which they recorded in *sancta scriptura* to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so also the interpreters of Scripture—the

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<sup>19</sup> Edward M. Peters, "Transgressing the Limits Set by the Fathers: Authority and Impious Exegesis in Medieval Thought," *Christendom and its Discontents: Exclusion, Persecution, and Rebellion 1000–1500*, ed. Scott L. Waugh and Peter D. Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 342.

<sup>20</sup> I. S. Robinson, "Church and Papacy," *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 277.

<sup>21</sup> Robinson, *Authority and Resistance* (see note 1), 26.

Fathers, councils and popes—were inspired by the same Holy Spirit ... A decree of the pope is an *autoritas*, because its true *auctor* is the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup>

## Legitimizing Papal Authority

Recognizing the basis for Gregory's understanding of the legitimacy of his authority as rooted in the Scripture and the Church Fathers, and therefore in God, our inquiry into Gregory's conceptualization and utilization of authority opens with the 7 March 1080 entry into the Register, a record of the Lenten Synod of 1080. The record offers a recapitulation of the decisions made at the Synod, with additional commentary offered by Gregory: stern denunciations were handed down regarding lay investiture and previous depositions and excommunications against Archbishops Tedald of Milan (ep. 1075–1080), Guibert of Ravenna (ca. 1029–1100), and Roland of Treviso were reconfirmed. In addition, a reminder was offered to the Normans that should they “presume to invade or to plunder the lands of St. Peter ... we debar to [them] the favor of St. Peter and entry into a church,”<sup>23</sup> a brief examination of the issue of penance was entered, and a comment on papal elections was offered. The remainder of the record was given over to a lengthy defense of the second deposition and excommunication of Henry IV, a defense not addressed to the people, but to St. Peter, the one to whom Gregory feels most compulsion to justify his actions.

The conclusion of the record captures one of Gregory's most succinct statements on his understanding of authority, one that makes use of Scripture to strengthen its effectiveness and reveals the methodology that Gregory utilized to support his ideas and actions as pope. Gregory continually relies on Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers as a way of pointing to something beyond himself to anchor his claims to act as necessary:

Act now, I ask, most holy fathers and princes, that the whole world may understand and know that, if you can bind and loose in heaven, on earth you can take away from and grant to each one according to his merits empires, kingdoms, principalities, duchies, marches, counties, and the possessions of all men. For you have frequently taken away patriarchates, primacies, archbishoprics, and bishoprics from the wicked and unworthy and have given them to religious men. For if you judge spiritual things, should it be believed that you can do concerning secular things? And if you will judge the angels who rule over all proud princes, what can you do concerning their servants? Now let kings and all

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 340–41; *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 481.

secular princes learn how great you are, what you can do, and let them fear to belittle the command of your church.<sup>24</sup>

The context of this argument is vital, as the second deposition finds pope and king in significantly different places politically than the first excommunication and deposition in 1076. Gregory's previous advantages and support had gradually eroded due to his long fight against Henry IV, and his position was significantly weaker in 1080. In fact, at the Council of Brixen in late 1080, Wibert, Archbishop of Ravenna, was elected (anti-)pope and took the name Clement III. Within a few short years Henry's troops occupied Rome, Gregory was effectively imprisoned in Castel Sant'Angelo, and finally "rescued" by the Normans in 1084. It is important to note that the vigorous defense of papal authority in the letter may be the sign of a last, final effort to build a case for his papacy and the authority of the reforms that he attempted to enact throughout his papacy.

Recognizing the context of the report of the Lenten Synod, the importance of the question of authority is heightened—by what right does the pope excommunicate and depose kings? While the former is more easily answered, it is the latter question that truly roiled the waters of the late eleventh century. Gregory's responses, both in the Lenten Synod of 1080 and the letter to Bishop Hermann of Metz in March 1081 provided an argument wherein Gregory stated that he had the authority to act as necessary in either the spiritual or temporal realm for the good and care of the people. Gregory "insisted on the pope's right, and indeed duty, to legislate for the needs of the Church."<sup>25</sup>

To locate the root and explanation for Gregory's understanding and conceptualization of authority, historians of the eleventh century regularly direct the reader to the *Dictatus papae*; for example Colin Morris, who states

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<sup>24</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 344; "Agite nunc, queso, patres et principes sanctissimi, ut omnis mundus intellegat et cognoscat, quia, si potestis incelo ligare et solvere, potestis in terra imperia regna principatus ducatus marchias comitatus et omnium hominum possessiones pro meritis tollere unicuique et concedere. Vos enim patriarchatus primatus archiepiscopatus episcopatus frequenter tulistis pravis et indignis et religiosis viris dedistis. Si enim spiritualia iudicatis, quid de secularibus vos posse credendum est? Et si angelos dominantes omnibus superbis principibus iudicabitis, quid de illorum servis facere potestis? Addiscant nunc reges et omnes seculi principes, quanti vos estis, quid potestis, et timeant parvipendere iussionem ecclesie vestre." *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 487.

<sup>25</sup> Kathleen Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 78.



that “it is a crucial text in the interpretation of Gregory’s policy,”<sup>26</sup> and Kathleen Cushing, who commented that “what is most striking about these sentences, however, is the fact that not only were all the papacy’s powers now drawn up in one single document, but also that, with only a few exceptions, these principles were supported by long-standing canonical tradition.”<sup>27</sup>

A few examples of these “famous clauses on prerogatives and privileges of the pope and of the Roman church,”<sup>28</sup> especially those claiming authority over secular or temporal rulers, will provide necessary clarity:

- 8. That he alone can use imperial insignia.
- 9. That all princes kiss the feet of the pope alone.
- 12. That he is permitted to depose emperors.
- 19. That he should be judged by no one.
- 22. That the Roman church has never erred nor, as scripture testifies, will she ever err.
- 23. That the Roman pontiff, if he shall have been canonically instituted, is indubitably made holy by the merits of blessed Peter, as is testified by Ennodius, bishop of Pavia, with many holy fathers supporting him, just as is contained in the decrees of blessed Pope Symmachus.<sup>29</sup>

A problem arises as the all too brief document, though notorious, is not as helpful as its declarative statements might suggest. Relying on the *Dictatus* is problematic because it is a mere scratching of the surface of the deeper understanding of authority that Gregory develops elsewhere in the Register. The collection of brief statements on authority that is the *Dictatus papae* is problematic precisely because it is a collection of brief statements, with no additional gloss or explanation. The statements of the *Dictatus* found in the second book of the Register, nestled between two early March 1075 letters, resist our attempts to extract greater meaning from them because they are not elucidated upon, and ignored by later eleventh century and twelfth century

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26 Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 111. Morris additionally notes that, “the majority view of historians has been that it consists of headings for a small collection of canons defining the authority of the papacy,” *ibid*, 112.

27 Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy* (see note 25), 79.

28 Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy* (see note 1), 117.

29 *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 149–50; “VIII. Quod solus possit uti imperialibus insigniis. VIII. Quos solius pape pedes omnes principes deosculentur. XII. Quod illi liceat imperatores deponere. XVIII. Quod a nemine ipse iudicari debeat. XXII. Quod Romana ecclesia nunquam erravit nec im perpetuum scriptura testante errabit. XXIII. Quod Romanus ... pontifex, si canonicè, fuerit ordinatus, meritis beati Petri indubitanter efficitur sanctus testante sancto Ennodio Papiensi episcopo ei multis sanctis patribus faventibus, sicut in decretis beati Symachi pape continetur.” *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 204–07.

thinkers. Even Gregory does not revisit them, thus their value as definitive statements of Gregory's ideology is limited.

## Authority in the 1081 Letter to Bishop Hermann of Metz

The 15 March 1081 letter to Hermann of Metz is far more detailed, and therefore more effective, in unpacking Gregory's conceptualization of authority, and thus demands a close reading to understand Gregory's rationale for his methodology and actions. Additionally, as H. E. J. Cowdrey notes, the letter to Bishop Hermann of Metz is not only a "nuanced and rounded picture of papal authority,"<sup>30</sup> but also "achieved a wide circulation and was regarded as authoritative by papalist writers and canonists into the twelfth century."<sup>31</sup> Recognizing its influence the letter serves as the best example of Gregory's position on authority.

The context of the letter robs Gregory of the ability to simply assert his authority, even authority based on the commands of Peter or the Prophets; the previous deposition in 1076 was such a revolutionary act that some form of explanation had to be offered, especially in light of the renewal of the deposition and excommunication in 1080, as such actions did not have any actual historical precedent.

After grudgingly admitting that something must be articulated in response to these vexing questions regarding legitimacy and authority, Gregory continues by opening his argument with the strongest papal proof text, Matthew 16:16–19, appealing directly to Christ's authority:

For that we may say a few things about many, who does not know the voice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who says in the gospel: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And to you I shall give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall also be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Cowdrey, *Gregory VII* (see note 1), 504.

<sup>31</sup> Cowdrey, *Gregory VII* (see note 1), 504. See also Colin Morris, who notes the reception of the Second Letter to Hermann of Metz as being "widely known in Germany." Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy* (see note 26), 127.

<sup>32</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 388; "Nam ut de multis pauca dicamus, quis ignorat vocem domini ac salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi dicentis in evangelio: 'Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram edificabo ecclesiam meam, et porte inferi non prevalebunt ad versus eam; et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum; et quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in celis, et

Gregory continues by asking a pertinent question, "Are kings here excepted, or are they not of the sheep that the Son of God has committed to blessed Peter?"<sup>33</sup> Gregory seeks to define the king as simply one more of the sheep of the fold, and therefore a part of the flock that the shepherd must tend. The question is intended to produce a simple denial, "no, indeed, the king is not excepted," the king must live under the same lordship as passed down by Christ to Peter and to Peter's successors. The argument claims a direct line of authority as handed down by the external and superior force and source, and seeks to position the king in an automatically subordinate position.

Continuing the development of the theme of legitimacy, Gregory then details the next step in the development of the Church after the receiving of the divine commission by Peter, by noting that:

Therefore as for this disposition of the divine will, this foundation of the government of the church, this privilege primarily handed down and confirmed by heavenly decree to blessed Peter the prince of apostles, the holy fathers receiving and conserving it with great veneration have called the holy Roman church the universal mother alike in general councils and also in their other writings and deeds. And just as they have received her teachings in confirmation of the faith and instruction in sacred religion, so too they have received her judgments, thereby consenting and as it were by one spirit and by one voice agreeing that all greater matters and especial items of business as well as the judgments of all the churches should be referred to hers as to the mother and head, that appeal should never be made against her, and that her judgments neither should nor can be revised or rejected by anyone.<sup>34</sup>

Gregory builds on the idea of the founding by not only describing a general authority that had been wielded by the Church, but also a specific authority in the Church's dealings with kings. He cites a series of precedents by Pope

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quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in celis." *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 548.

<sup>33</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 388; "Nunquid sunt hic reges excepti, aut non sunt de ovibus, quas filius Dei beato Petro commisit?" *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 548.

<sup>34</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 388; "Hanc itaque divine voluntatis institutionem, hoc firma mentum dispensationis ecclesie, hoc privilegium beato Petro apostolorum principi celesti decreto principaliter traditum atque firmatum sancti patres cum magna veneratione suscipientes atque servantes sanctam Romanam ecclesiam tam in generalibus conciliis quam etiam in ceteris scriptis et gestis suis universalem matrem appellaverunt. Et sicut eius documenta in confirmatione fidei et eruditione sacre religionis, ita etiam iudicia susceperunt, in hoc consentientes et quasi uno spiritu et una voce concordantes omnes maiores res et precipua negotia necnon omnium ecclesiarum iudicia ad eam quasi ad matrem et caput debere referri, ab ea nusquam appellari, iudicia eius a nemine retractari aut refelli debere vel posse." *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 548–49.

Gelasius I, Pope Julius (337–352), and Pope Gregory I that all purport to show that temporal rulers are always subordinate to spiritual rulers, and that his excommunications and depositions are not innovative, as he relies on these Church Fathers to provide the justification for his actions. Note the way in which he subverts the most vexing question regarding his treatment of Henry in the next paragraph, as he leads with another reference to the arguments and efforts of Gregory I.

Now if blessed Gregory, a most mild doctor, has laid down that kings who break his statutes over a single hospital are not only deposed but also excommunicated and condemned in the eternal scrutiny, who may take us to task for having deposed and excommunicated.<sup>35</sup>

Gregory argues that Gregory I provides the necessary precedent to act when necessary, a not uncommon argument in the Register. What is unique in this statement is the ordering of the actions and the severity that they imply, as Gregory VII implies that deposition, the truly revolutionary action that he has taken against Henry on two different occasions, is the secondary action. What is far more important and drastic, in this construction, is excommunication. Why? Simply losing one's throne pales in comparison to losing the kingdom of heaven. Even in punishment, Gregory establishes a hierarchy of loss, and the spiritual loss is always the far greater punishment.<sup>36</sup>

This categorization is an integral component of the argument that Gregory is attempting to make, as it provides the opportunity to reinforce relative position within the order, an order that he constructs out of the precedents set by Scripture and the actions of the Church Fathers. He expands on the idea of this order in the next paragraph:

Who may doubt that the priests of Christ are to be reckoned the fathers and masters of kings, of princes, and of all the faithful? Is it not acknowledged to be a sign of wretched insanity, if a son should try to subject to himself a father or a disciple a master, and to make subject to his power by wrongful obligations him by whom he believes that he can be bound and loosed not only on earth but also in heaven?<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 389; “Quodsi beatus Gregorius, doctor utique mitissimus, reges, qui statuta sua super unum xenodochium violarent, non modo deponi sed etiam excommunicari atque in eterno examine dampnari decrevit.” *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 550–51.

<sup>36</sup> Tellenbach notes that: “Only exceptionally was he [Gregory VII] in a position to apply physical force, but he certainly regarded excommunication, the withdrawal of eternal salvation, as the most severe threat possible.” Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe* (see note 4), 206.

<sup>37</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 390; “Quis dubitet sacerdotes Christi regum et principum omniumque fidelium patres et magistros censeri? Nonne miserabilis insanie esse cognoscitur, si

As we note in Gregory's explanation, Gregory simply does not, cannot, see the possibility for disagreement with his position, as to him it should be perfectly self-evident, for if priests, and even the lowly exorcists, are above temporal rulers, how much higher above the king is the pope?

Gregory then employs Ambrose (ca. 337–340–397), a respected and recognized authority as one of the doctors of the Church, to make the point that these two categories exist, and how great is the distance between the two, as Ambrose remarks that, "Brothers, the episcopal honor and dignity cannot possibly be equated to any comparisons."<sup>38</sup> Ambrose offers a comparison, nonetheless, arguing that: "[I]f your comparison is the lustre of kings and the diadem of princes, it will be far lower than if you compare the metal of lead to the lustre of gold."<sup>39</sup> The difference in categories is defined by Gregory using a far more pragmatic appraisal, noting that the key difference is a matter of priority:

In sum, it is fitting that any good Christians whatsoever should more appropriately be regarded as kings than should evil princes. For by seeking the glory of God the former rule strongly over themselves; but seeking not the things of God but their own, the latter being enemies to themselves oppress others tyrannically. These are the body of Christ the true king, but those are that of the devil.<sup>40</sup>

Gregory reinforces this argument just a few short paragraphs later, rephrasing and stating that "so much for kings and emperors who being exceedingly puffed up by worldly glory reign not for God but for themselves."<sup>41</sup>

Gregory then returns to his compulsion to act, grounding the idea of his actions in the authority as granted to him by a source whose legitimacy

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filius patrem, discipulus magistrum sibi conetur subiugare et iniquis obligationibus illum sue potestati subicere, a quo credit non solum in terra, sed etiam in celis se ligari posse et solvi?" *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 553.

**38** *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 391; "Honor, fratres, et sublimitas episcopalis nullis poterit comparationibus adequari." *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 555.

**39** *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 391; "Si regum fulgori compares et principum diademati, longe erit inferius, quam si plumbi metallum ad auri fulgorem compares." *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 555.

**40** *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 392; "Ad summam, quoslibet bonos christianos multo convenientius quam malos principes reges intelligi decet. Isti enim gloriam Dei querendo se ipsos strenue regunt, at illi non que Dei sunt sed sua querentes 2 sibimet hostes alios tyrannice opprimunt. Hi veri regis Christi, illi vero diaboli corpus sunt." *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 557.

**41** *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 393; "Hec de regibus et imperatoribus, qui seculari gloria nimium tumidi non Deo sed sibi regnant." *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 558.

cannot be questioned. The difficulty for the efficacy of Gregory's argument is the very reality of the necessity of crafting an argument in response to Hermann's request. If even Gregory's closest supporters are questioning his actions, then Gregory has either lost or is losing whatever authority he may have wielded at the beginning of his papacy, regardless of the sources he uses to provide the legitimacy of his claims.

Gregory concludes the letter with a reiteration of two significant arguments from the letter. First, he restates the differentiation between temporal and spiritual leadership, now adding the distinction that those who become pope are transformed into better men through the merits of St. Peter, and that the quality of the temporal leader is irrelevant as even the best of the temporal rulers falter, including such Biblical heroes Saul and David.<sup>42</sup> Second, Gregory restates the need for obedience and that if "we are commanded to obey our fathers and mothers after the flesh, how much more those after the spirit?"<sup>43</sup>

In both cases Gregory VII reiterates the operative reality: popes, by the merits of the unassailable St. Peter, are made more holy so that they can govern authoritatively and thus effectively, always focusing on what they are called to do and be. Likewise, kings, no matter the reputation of the individual who happens to ascend to the throne, will only fail and falter. They simply cannot perform as they ought because, ultimately, they serve themselves, not God.

## Conclusion

Reading Pope Gregory VII's 15 March 1081 letter to Bishop Hermann of Metz is instructive, as in this letter Gregory articulates an explicit defense of papal authority. The argument, developed on a hierarchical ordering of governance, is a logical exploration of authority, if you accept Gregory's premises—that the temporal is subordinate to the spiritual, and that the witness of the Scriptures provides the necessary source of ultimate legitimacy. It is neither the most elegant nor altogether the most compelling argument, but then as Gregory VII was not a systematic theologian, he "tended far more often to react to situations as they happened."<sup>44</sup> It is an argument born of necessity and a fervent belief that his actions were necessary for saving society from ruin at

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<sup>42</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 394; *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 559.

<sup>43</sup> *Register*, ed. Cowdrey (see note 9), 395; "Nam si carnales patres et matres honorare iubemur, quanto magis spirituales?" *Das Register*, ed. Caspar (see note 9), 561–62.

<sup>44</sup> Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy* (see note 7), 79.

the hands of temporal leaders who only sought their own glory, and that it was his responsibility to act for the sake of the Church and society; he “lived and acted in an unshaken consciousness of his own divine vocation.”<sup>45</sup>

The argument is built on Gregory's appeal to Scripture and the Church Fathers as providing both the justification for his reform program—the desire to create *libertas ecclesiae*, the campaign to eradicate the canonical abuses of simony, clerical marriage, and lay investiture, and the ability to excommunicate and depose as necessary for the good of the Church and society—and offering legitimacy for pursuing this course. In each instance, Gregory articulated the understanding that he developed his arguments to act as necessary based not on his own ideological need, but on the unassailable authority of Scripture and the Church Fathers. In Gregory's use of the Prophets and St. Peter we see Gregory declaring that he proceeded because of their demands, their call to action, their mandate, not his own. Scripture provided the necessary authority and motivation for Gregory to act. Gregory then incorporated material from the Church Fathers to show that his actions were not unprecedented, that the forefathers, especially Pope Gregory I, had trod this ground before. Gregory's central argument was that he acted because he had been commanded to do so by the Prophets, St. Peter, and Christ, and as the Church had always acted when necessary in the past. Gregory's belief in the severity of the crisis that faced Christendom created the need to act with such seeming abandon and haste. Gregory attempted to enact the reform program, while providing the justification and legitimization of the program by appealing to the authority of Scripture and the Church Fathers.

Pope Gregory VII's ultimate success is debatable, at least in purely pragmatic terms, for in the end Gregory had to be rescued in Rome by Robert Guiscard (ca. 1015–1085) and the Normans. Rome had been occupied by Henry IV's forces, an anti-pope had been elected, many even in Rome had turned against Gregory, and Gregory spent most of 1084 taking refuge in Castel Sant'Angelo. Clearly his excommunications and depositions of Henry IV did not translate into personal political advantage. The reform program to create *libertas ecclesiae* was more successful, simony, lay investiture, and clerical marriage did wane, a final agreement on lay investiture reached in the Concordat of Worms in 1122. Likewise, members of the Gregorian party ascended to the papacy after Gregory, most notably Odo of Lagery, who would become Pope Urban II (papacy 1088–1099). Urban II continued the reform efforts, but did so without Gregory's radicality or fervor.

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45 Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe* (see note 4), 205.

While Gregory's efforts may not have yielded immediate political gains, they most certainly did have a significant impact on the way in which the papacy was viewed. His tumultuous papacy brought the idea and argument that the Church should be freed from any form of secular entanglement closer to fruition. Gregory argued that the justification for this freedom was based on authority derived from Scripture and Church Fathers. Gregory acted because he felt compelled by the Prophets and St. Peter to do so; his was a religious rationale to act for the sake of the needs of the Church. Gregory's actions, his defense of papal authority, and his influence, have been vigorously debated ever since his death in 1085.



Sini Kangas

# A Great Stirring of Hearts or Papal Inspiration? Contesting Popular Authority in the Preaching of the First Crusade<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

From the outset in 1095, crusading was a pan-European mass movement that involved enthusiastic popular expectations and exalted political objectives. The sources state that in that year Pope Urban II (papacy 1088–1099) was preaching the holy war amongst the Franks, whose hearts were stirring at the urge to fight for God and the atonement of their sins. In the spring of 1096, four major armies, preceded and accompanied by an unfathomable number of unarmed pilgrims, set forth in order to liberate the Holy Land from the Saracen foe. Against all odds, the remnants of these pilgrim-armies succeeded in conquering Jerusalem three years later (15 July 1099). The city would remain in Western hands until 1187, when Saladin (ca. 1138–1193), the great unifier of the Muslim Near East, inflicted a disastrous defeat on the combined forces of the Frankish Kingdom of Jerusalem at the Battle of Hattin, capturing the king, Guy of Lusignan (ca. 1150–1194, r. 1186–1192), destroying much of the nobility, and marching to capture the city after a brief siege.<sup>2</sup>

Ecclesiastical sources stress the importance of the papal appeal as the *primus motor* that fuelled the rising zeal for crusading during 1095. First and foremost, the crusade was the idea of Pope Urban II. Modern historiography has generally accepted this view albeit emphasizing the importance of the predecessors of Pope Urban, most notably Gregory VII (r. 1077–1085), in the formation of the novel ideology.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Philip Line, Mia Korpiola, and Tuija Ainonen for their insightful comments.

<sup>2</sup> The crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem lingered in decline until 1291, when Acre, the last Frankish outpost in Syro-Palestine was lost. The Western nobility was evacuated to Cyprus, where the seat of the henceforth nominal kings of Jerusalem was transferred.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965), 10–11, 35; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London: Continuum, 2009), 13–15; Jonathan Phillips, *Holy Warriors: A Modern History of the Crusades* (London: The Bodley Head, 2009), 1–5; H. E. J. Cowdrey, “The Reform Papacy and the Origin of the Crusades,” *Le concile de Clermont de 1095 et l’appel à la croisade*, ed. Andre Vauchez. Actes du Colloque Universitaire

This article discusses how the idea of crusading as a fruit of papal inspiration became established as the authorized explanation of the series of events preceding the capture of Jerusalem in later history writing. The concept of authority here indicates the power to refine, modify and perhaps completely alter the course of history by the production of texts. The process of writing involved far more than ink and vellum; it was conducted by a network of learned ecclesiastics in the service of the institution aiming at the strengthening of the papal claim for leadership, not only over a religious mass movement under formation, but over the whole Christendom. Our three Benedictine sources—Baudry of Dol, Robert of Rheims and Guibert of Nogent—all emphasize the papal role as the initiator of the crusade in line with this overall aim of the Western Church.

The contest for authority and power was closely intertwined with the early history of crusading, and even if the spiritual interest was genuine, various ecclesiastical, political, and dynastic assumptions affected the documentation of the movement. From the theological point of view, the crusade was a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> For the early crusaders, Jerusalem was understood as the *umbilicus mundi*,<sup>5</sup> the center of the world, whose possession would make the claim of Christian leadership incontestable: the grasp of the holy city would symbolize the hegemony of Christians over non-believers and show the power of the true religion over the false one.<sup>6</sup> The ultimate aim was no less than a preparation for the second coming of Christ. It was taught in the Bible that the new Jerusalem would descend from the heavens at the place of the worldly city, and that the Lamb would share his throne there with those

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International de Clermont-Ferrand, 23–25 juin 1995. Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome, 236 (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1997), 65–83; I. S. Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ," *History* 58 (1973): 184–90.

<sup>4</sup> The term "crusade" was not used in the twelfth-century sources. When referring to the expedition, sources use the terms *iter* and *peregrinatio* which simply mean a pilgrimage. When the term *crucesignatus* emerges in the sources from the late 1180s onward, its basic meaning is a pilgrim, who has sown the badge of the cross to his clothes to show that his destination is Jerusalem—just as a pilgrim to Compostela of Rome would have been wearing a badge of a shell or palm leaf. M. Markowski, "Crucesignatus: Its Origins and Early Usage," *Journal of Medieval History* 10 (1984): 1557–64.

<sup>5</sup> Robert of Rheims, *Historia Iherosolimitana*. Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Occidentaux, 3. Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1866), 729, 727.

<sup>6</sup> For contemporaries perceiving the conquest of Jerusalem as the utmost goal of the expedition, see the classical explanation by Carl Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1935), 305, 308–11, 316.

who had fought and won in the name of God.<sup>7</sup> In simple logic, possession of the earthly city could be interpreted as a sign of authorization to rule as a divinely chosen people among the nations of men.

Would another conclusion have been possible? The focus here will be on the formation of the textual tradition of crusading during the first decade of the twelfth century, and more precisely, on four texts.

The earliest and most original in content of these texts, the anonymous *Gesta Francorum* (ca. 1101), states that the stirring of Frankish hearts initiated the crusade. The text clearly indicates that the movement in the Frankish lands arose spontaneously, and only thereafter mentions the papal call, which greatly strengthened the popular urge. The other texts were produced by three clerics, Baudry of Dol (ca. 1050–1130), Guibert of Nogent (ca. 1055–1124) and Robert of Rheims (also known as Robert the Monk, years of life unknown) by 1108. All three use the work of the anonymous author or a very similar text as their primary source. What is interesting is that the three ecclesiastics sharply criticize the *Gesta* in the opening lines of their chronicles, and especially the anonymous writer's interpretation of the beginning of the First Crusade, stressing instead the role of the pope as the initiator of the movement. On the whole, however, they follow the narration of the original source.

For the leading elites, spiritual pre-eminence in the Holy Land was intermingled with domestic questions of political leadership and sources of power. The emergence of crusading was preceded by and paralleled with the investiture controversy (ca. 1075–1122). During the clash of the spiritual and temporal rule, papal claims for the plenitude of power led to bitter competition between the emperor and the pope over the leadership of Western Christendom.<sup>8</sup> Achieving a recognized position as the head of the vastly popular crusader movement enhanced papal authority as a spiritual potentate, but even more important was his adoption of the role of supreme commander of the crusader army and the emerging new Christian knighthood in the service of the Church. Crusading was a strategy to gain power over—or at least share it with—the lay military elite.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Apocalypse, 3:10–12, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Alfons Becker, *Papst Urban II, Teil 1: Herkunft und kirchliche Laufbahn: Der Papst und die lateinische Christenheit. Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, 19: 1 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1964); I. S. Robinson, *The Papacy 1073–1198* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); see also Ken Grant's article on the investiture controversy, "A Divine Mandate: Pope Gregory VII's Defense of Papal Authority," in this book.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Tyerman, *The Invention of the Crusades* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1998), 10–11.

For the pope, the support of the Frankish nobility was essential. In his struggle with the Holy Roman emperor, inherited from his predecessors Gregory VII and Victor III (r. 1086–1087), Urban had to contend with the disturbing presence of the powerful antipope Clement III (papacy claimed 1080–1100), backed by the imperial party. For the major part of his papacy, Urban had to make continuous endeavors to suppress his co-claimant and attain a lasting grip over the city of Rome. Born as a member of the noble house of Lagery in Champagne, the pope found the King of France and his vassals to be his natural allies as well as his most important source of military and financial support. It was no coincidence that Urban chose to preach the crusade among the Franks.

Furthermore, the accumulation of religious and military might could also act as a fundraising instrument and source of economic authority. On leaving home, crusaders often made donations to religious institutions, dictated wills that would benefit the Church should they die on their expedition, and sold and exchanged landed property to raise funds for the journey. Even if the crusaders themselves usually returned home laden with spiritual rather than material wealth, their pilgrimage often increased the financial strength of the mother Church.<sup>10</sup>

## The Sources

The production of a written history made an essential contribution to the process of establishing crusading as a highly regarded religious practice. The great number of surviving sources, the first of which occur very soon after the conquest of Jerusalem, shows that contemporaries clearly understood the importance of a written, dogmatic historical framework for the new phenomenon.

The three extant eyewitness reports from the First Crusade include the texts of the anonymous writer of the *Gesta Francorum* as well as those by the crusader chaplains Fulcher of Chartres (ca. 1059–ca. 1127) and Raymond of Aguilers (years of life unknown). All three concluded their chronicle of the events of the crusade proper no later than 1102.<sup>11</sup> Out of these texts, the *Gesta* has achieved the distinc-

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<sup>10</sup> For crusader charters, see Jonathan Riley-Smith, “The Idea of Crusading in the Charters of Early Crusaders, 1095–1102,” *Le concile de Clermont de 1095 et l’appel à la croisade*, ed. Andre Vauchez (see note 3), 155–66.

<sup>11</sup> *Gesta Francorum*, ed. and trans. Rosalind Hill (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962), ix; Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens* (see note 6), 359; Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia*

tion of being the primary source, the oldest and perhaps most reliable among the texts, frequently used by contemporaries as well as later historians of the crusades. It has been chosen as the starting point of this article also, since the anonymous author seems to offer an alternative interpretation that can be used to research the role of the pope as the initiator of the crusade. Raymond of Aguilers does not discuss the beginning of the movement, whereas Fulcher of Chartres's conciliatory view does not conflict with either of the suggested courses of events.

The primary sources are complemented by three early texts by authors, who did not personally accompany the crusade. Baudry of Dol, Guibert of Nogent, and Robert the Monk represent the earliest examples of Benedictine crusade historians from northern and central France. Baudry and Guibert belonged to the highly educated elite, while Robert's curriculum vitae remains less clear. Since none of the three participated in the First Crusade, they were dependent on secondary information in compiling their chronicles. Their interpretation of the origins of the crusade supports mainstream French monastic ideas in advocating the primacy of the French Pope, Urban II.

All three were using an anonymous eyewitness account as their primary source, probably the *Gesta Francorum*, which has traditionally been addressed to a Norman *miles* (cavalryman or knight) from southern Italy.<sup>12</sup> However, the Benedictine brothers criticize their common source for its vulgar style and declare their intention to correct its shortcomings.<sup>13</sup>

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*Hierosolymitana* (1095–1127), ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1913), 12, 66–70; Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*. Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Occidentaux, 3. Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1866), preface; Colin Morris, "The *Gesta Francorum* as Narrative History," *Reading Medieval Studies* 19 (1993): 55–71; A. C. Krey "A Neglected Passage in the *Gesta* and its Bearing on the Literature of the First Crusade," *The Crusades and Other Historical Essays Presented to D. C. Munro by His Former Students*, ed. L. J. Paetow (New York, 1928), 57–78; John France, "The Anonymous *Gesta Francorum* and the *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* of Raymond of Aguilers and the *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere* of Peter Tudebode: An Analysis of the Textual Relationship between Primary Sources of the First Crusade," *The Crusades and Their Sources: Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton*, ed. John France and William G. Zajac (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 5, 53.

<sup>12</sup> *Gesta Francorum* (see note 11), xi–xiii; Kenneth B. Wolf, "Crusade and Narrative: Bohemond and the *Gesta Francorum*," *Journal of Medieval History* 17 (1990): 207–16; H. Oehler, "Studien zu den *Gesta Francorum*," *Mittelaltinisches Jahrbuch* 6 (1970): 58–97.

<sup>13</sup> Baudry of Dol, *Historia Hierosolimitana*. Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Occidentaux, 4. Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1879), 10; Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, ed. R. H. C. Huygens. Corpus Christianorum,

According to Baudry of Dol the anonymous writer had contrived to tell the truth, but because of the clumsiness of the description and language, he had ended up by disparaging a noble subject.<sup>14</sup> Robert similarly complains that the anonymous text did not make the best of the sequence of wonderful events and that the author was unsophisticated in his style and expression. In fact, the anonymous history did not even mention the launching of the crusade at the Council of Clermont. Put together, these shortcomings had made Abbot Bernard authorize Robert to write an improved version of the crusade.<sup>15</sup>

Guibert of Nogent, describing himself as a man who sees the passion of grammar everywhere, did not know whether to laugh or fall asleep while reading such a simply-worded and grammatically weak text. While admitting that ignorant people might well be compelled by the novelty of the story as it was, he reminds the reader that divine matters should be treated by men of formal training, who are able to write in a controlled manner.<sup>16</sup>

All three Benedictine authors rationalize their writing process by the urgent need to provide a correct history of the great deeds done beyond the sea. The criticism of *Gesta Francorum* occurs in the opening chapters of their chronicles. This seems to suggest a certain recognition and popularity of the text or texts criticized—it is possible that the authors are referring to several contextually related works—as well as the urge to extend ecclesiastical control over such popular history-writing. Despite their criticism, the Benedictine brothers have nevertheless chosen the anonymous account as their primary source, which indicates either firm belief in the authenticity and credibility of the

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Continuatio Mediaevalis, 127 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 79, 119–20; Robert of Rheims, *Historia Iherosolimitana* (see note 5), 721–22.

<sup>14</sup> “Sed nescio, quis compiler, nomine suppresso, libellum super hac re nimis rusticanum ediderat; veritatem tamen texuerat, sed propter inurbanitatem codicis, nobilis material viluerat,” Baudry of Dol, *Historia Iherosolimitana* (see note 13), 10.

<sup>15</sup> “Abbas nomine Bernardus, litterarum scientia et morum probitate praeditus, ostendit mihi unam historiam secundum hanc materiam, sed ei admodum displicebat, partim quia initium suum, quod in Clari Montis concilio constitutum fuit, non habebat, partim quia series tam pulchrae materiei inculta jacebat, et litterarium composition dictionum inculta vacillabat,” Robert of Rheims, *Historia Iherosolimitana* (see note 5), 721–22.

<sup>16</sup> “Erat siquidem eadem Historia, sed verbis contexta plus equo simplicibus et quae multotiens grammaticae naturas excederet lectorumque vapidi insipiditate sermonis sepius exanimare valeret. Ea plane minus eruditibus nec de locutionis qualitate curantibus ob illius novae relationis amorem satis oportuna videtur, nec aliter quam illi sentiunt ab auctore dici debuisse putatur; his autem, quibus pabulum eloquentiae estimatur honestas ... dum susceptae materiei seriem nudo procedure vestigio vident, iuxta poetae sensum aut dormitant aut rident,” Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos* (see note 13), 79–80.

text, or that the renowned authority of a text as primary source cannot be ignored without an explanation, or both of these.

Is it possible for a historian to recognize the veracity of the original work, but deny its worth because of its grammatical weakness and unpolished style? How should these references to crudity be interpreted?

## The Predominance of Correct History to Benefit Future Christianity

Common to all four sources is the purpose, to glorify crusading: The interpretation of the crusade as a divinely inspired reconquest of the Holy Land does seem coherent. The course of the events on the march east and the subsequent military conquests converge. The writers share a deeply religious view of the world, and discuss crusading as a part of divine history, representing it against a biblical background as sacred warfare ordained by God. The style of description combines religious interpretation with the warlike Christian heroism of the warrior epics (*chanson de geste*).

However, the writers do not share the same level of scholarship and learning. This becomes clear with a comparison of quotations from classical authors found in each text. In the early twelfth century, there was already a long tradition of creating an aura of prestige for a historical work by presenting it as a continuation of the texts of classical antiquity. This aim is clearly expressed in the literary creation of the First Crusade. Baudry of Dol cites Sallust and Cicero in the prologue of his chronicle, Guibert of Nogent similarly mentions Cicero and Terence, while Ralph of Caen refers to Horace.<sup>17</sup> This is a conventional setting in the historical works of the Middle Ages, but it is nevertheless fascinating to grasp the value of literary convention even for such works as these, whose protagonists primarily identify themselves with the violent heroes of the contemporary vernacular epics.

While the learned clergymen are able to give numerous citations from classical authors, such quotations are rare in the anonymous *Gesta Francorum*. It is likely that the author was indeed an uneducated “rusticus” as

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<sup>17</sup> Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos* (see note 13), 80–81, 83; Baudry of Dol, *Historia Jerosomitana* (see note 13), 9–10; Ralph of Caen wrote his text in the Kingdom of Jerusalem before 1106, Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi*, ed. E. Martene and U. Durand. Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Occidentaux, 3. Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1866), *prologus*.

suggested by Baudry.<sup>18</sup> Another possibility is that he was writing for an audience ignorant of classical tradition, and perhaps even finding that kind of references boring and irrelevant. This is an interesting point, since it raises the question of the target audience for whom the crusader chronicles were written and more importantly read aloud. Did the audience consist of clerics or laymen, and what were their backgrounds and expectations? Who paid for the compilation of the work and for what reasons? It is possible that some of the chronicles were produced to respond to the tastes of the lay nobility, whereas some were aimed at a more restricted clerical audience.<sup>19</sup>

Baudry and Guibert belonged to learned Benedictine elite, and were trained to write eloquent Latin. Is it likely that men of higher learning were appalled by the *Gesta's* language and lack of classical references? This is not a plausible argument. Robert's Latin is not linguistically very far from the language written by the anonymous author, and to a varying extent all three adopt structures and vocabulary from the vernacular. The classical models are included mainly to accentuate the meaning of a particular event, and it would seem hypocritical to find this lack of cultured nuance so annoying that it should be mentioned in the preface of the work.<sup>20</sup>

What about the possibility that different prospective audiences could have dissimilar tastes? While Guibert was mainly concentrating on the clerical elite, Robert and Baudry were writing for the mass of the Christian public—Baudry claims that he was engaged in work to benefit the whole of future Christianity by producing a correct description of the First Crusade.<sup>21</sup> Unlike his critics, the author of *Gesta Francorum* does not dedicate the work to an ecclesiastical or lay patron, or mention his target audience. His chronicle, however, begins with a reference to the stirring of hearts in the Frankish crusaders, and thus it seems possible that the anonymous author was writing for his fellow crusaders:

When the time had already come, of which the Lord Jesus warns his faithful people every day, especially in the Gospel where he says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me," there was a great stirring of heart throughout the Frankish lands, so that if any man, with all his heart and all his mind,

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**18** Baudry of Dol, *Historia Jerosomitana* (see note 13), 10.

**19** Sini Kangas, "Inimicus Dei et sanctae Christianitatis? Saracens and their Prophet in Twelfth-century Crusade Propaganda and Western Travesties of Muhammad's Life," *The Crusades and the Near East: Cultural Histories*, ed. Conor Kostick (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 131–60.

**20** Robert the Monk in *sermo apologeticus* (see note 5); Baudry of Dol in *prologus* (see note 13); Guibert of Nogent in *praefatio* (see note 13).

**21** Baudry of Dol, *Historia Jerosomitana* (see note 13), 10; Robert of Rheims, *Historia Iherosolimitana* (see note 5), 723.



really wanted to follow God and faithfully to bear the cross after him, he could make no delay in taking the road to the Holy Sepulchre as quickly as possible.<sup>22</sup>

Correct perceptions, stirring of hearts. Rather than scholarly ineptitude, the defect of *Gesta Francorum* is likely to be its lack of concern with a clerically oriented explanation of the crusade. The anonymous writer mentions the papal instigation only briefly, and only after describing the rise of lay enthusiasm in France. He explains the crusade as a popular religious movement and omits any notions of the institutional power of the Church. Coinciding with the rising power of papacy, the investiture controversy and the papal struggle for the plenitude of power, this was a grave failing from a clerical point of view. Ecclesiastical standards have not been met, as the lord Pope is barely present.

Unsurprisingly, the formation of the movement is treated in a significantly different manner in the Benedictine chronicles. Baudry, Robert and Guibert represent crusading in a theological framework and emphasize the leading role of the pope.

The chronicles of Robert and Baudry begin with the claim to papal authority for the expedition, and all three Benedictines give the papal legate, Bishop Adhemar, a prominent role among the leaders of the crusade.<sup>23</sup> *Gesta Francorum*, however, begins with a reference to Christ directly urging his faithful people to take the cross in his footsteps, and continues with a description of the popular urge to take the road to Jerusalem. Indeed, so great is the fervor throughout the Frankish lands that on hearing the call, the pope journeys across the Alps to preach crusading among the Franks.<sup>24</sup> The source of inspiration is clearly the popular desire to follow Christ, indicating a direct and intimate relation between man and God, and divesting the pope, who is not mentioned by name, of the authority of conceiving the crusade.

Baudry and Guibert emphasize the pope as the initiator of the Crusade. His personal authority to declare the crusade derives from his role as a representa-

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22 "Cum iam appropinquasset ille terminus quem dominus Iesus cotidie suis demonstrare fidelibus, specialiter in euangelio dicens: 'Si quis uult post me uenire, abneget semetipsum et tollat crucem suam et sequatur me', facta est igitur motio ualida per uniuersas Galliarum regions, ut si aliquis Deum studiose puroque corde fideliter baiulare uellet, non pigritaretur Sancti Sepulchri uiam celerius arripere," *Gesta Francorum* (see note 11), 1.

23 James Brundage, "Adhemar of Puy: The Bishop and His Critics," *Speculum* 34 (1959): 201–12.

24 "... Celerius arripere. Apostolicus namque Romanae sedis ultra montanas partes profectus est cum suis archiepiscopis, episcopis, abbatibus, et presbiteris, coepitque subtiliter sermoninari et predicare," *Gesta Francorum*, (see note 11), 1.

tive of the will of God, and his incontestable leadership of the Christian community. According to Baudry, as soon as Urban II had received from the East the dismaying news of the suffering of the Eastern Christians at the hands of infidels, he travelled to France to preach the words given to him by God to good and honorable men.<sup>25</sup> Guibert, agreeing with Baudry's implications on the primacy of the papal effort, sees it as fitting that the pope, as the servant of God, had chosen the Franks as the co-operative party, because this nation had shown their humble willingness to serve God and the apostolic see. The Franks were exceeding all other nations in their nobility, wisdom, courage and generosity, and especially the Germans, who with barbarous obstinacy opposed the Vicar of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

*Summa summarum*, according to the Benedictine historians the First Crusade was launched on papal initiative and supported by a lay response to the papal call for an integrated Christendom under the Roman pontiff.

## The Historical Interpretation: Later Texts and Their Emphasis

Considering that there are only eight remaining medieval copies of the *Gesta Francorum*, as opposed to 109 (94+7+8) of Robert, Baudry and Guibert, the monastic reaction might seem excessive. This is not necessarily the case. We know that the news of the First Crusade was circulating very rapidly, reaching not only the European heartlands, but also the Christian peripheries of the West. Guibert of Nogent mentions that in the summer of 1096, French ports received enthusiastic crusaders from the corners of the known world, and

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25 "Publicae praedicationis causa, papa Romanus, Urbanus nomine, venit in Gallias, et prout erat disertus seminiverbius, verbum Dei passim seminabat. Sane Placentiae concilio generali celebrato, praelibatus pontifex paulo post Arvernus advenit, ibique cum multis Galliarum episcopis et abbatibus iterum generalem synodum celebravit: in qua, quae ad fidem pertinebant praemissis, de Christianorum Ierosolimitanorum et Antiochienerum casibus aerumnosis huiusmodi sermonem subjunxit. Confluxerant etiam ad concilium et multis regionibus viri potentes, et honorati innumeri, quamvis cingulo laicalis militiae superbi," Baudry of Dol, *Historia Ierosolimitana* (see note 13), 12.

26 "Ceteris enim gentibus (Franci) erga beatum Petrum ergaque pontificalia decreta timoratus humilisque se habuit gens eadem nec temeritate, qua alii assolent, velamen malitiae arripere contra deum voluit libertatem. Videmus iam annis emensis pluribus Teutonicos, immo totius Lotharingae regnum, beati Petri eiusque pontificum preceptis barbarica quadam obstinatione reniti," Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos* (see note 13), 108–9.

even Northern people whose language was incomprehensible to the Franks.<sup>27</sup> Albert of Aachen, writing in about 1120, mentions that crusader armies were being mobilized *at the same time* in the Kingdom of Franks, Lotharingia, Germany, England and Denmark.<sup>28</sup> This is barely six months after Urban had launched the crusade at the Council of Clermont.

Taking into account the traditional paradigms of the circulation of information in the Middle Ages, the rapidity looks surprising. Either the crusade created an exception to the rule, or the process was already well under way in November 1095, when Urban was preaching in Clermont: the Benedictine sources refer not only to a certain crude little book,<sup>29</sup> but also to vulgar history and public singing in general<sup>30</sup> as the sources of incorrect information concerning the crusade. This kind of material was being circulated in France, and its popularity clearly provided an impetus for Baudry's, Robert's and Guibert's mission to write a correct version of the First Crusade. The routes of transmission of the four works compared in this article remain obscure, and we know very little of the early phases of any of them, and even less about the oral tradition connected to the context of their emergence.

When we compare the *Gesta Francorum* and the Benedictine sources with other contemporary or nearly contemporary texts, it is clear that the authority perceived or emphasized by chroniclers as the initial one behind the crusade varied over time.

The earliest First Crusade informant Bernold of St. Blasien (c. 1054–1100), states that in 1096 a great multitude of people from *Italia*, *Gallia* and *Germania* set out in order to fight the pagans and liberate Jerusalem. They were further inspired by the papal promise of the remission of sin. However, among the immense crowd, there were people who were unprepared for such a long journey, and who were thus unable to reach the Holy Land. Bernold's

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<sup>27</sup> Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos* (see note 13), 89.

<sup>28</sup> Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. and trans. Susan Edgington. Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 9.

<sup>29</sup> None of the three Benedictines mention the *Gesta Francorum* by any name. From the 1960s onward there has been a sporadic but ongoing scholarly discussion on whether their source actually was the *Gesta Francorum* or some unknown primary source, which would have been copied by the anonymous author of the *Gesta*. Whatever the case, the number of interpolations and loans found in both the *Gesta* and the works by Robert, Baudry and Guibert is so remarkable that the three were clearly either familiar with the *Gesta* or a text that would have been near-identical with the *Gesta*.

<sup>30</sup> Later in his work Guibert also states that his description of Mathomus (Prophet Muhammad) was based on popular opinion, since he had not been able to find any information about this person in ecclesiastical sources. Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos* (see note 12), 83, 94.

description thus refers to a popular moment, at the head of which was the pope (“*maximus author fuit*”).<sup>31</sup> The text does mention *populus* before the pope, but no other lay or spiritual authority.

Fulcher of Chartres (ca. 1059–ca. 1127), another clerical primary source and a participant in the First Crusade, mentions Urban II as the prime mover behind the *princes’ crusade*. According to Fulcher, the pope was motivated by the wish to pacify the quarrels between Christian princes as well as to reconquer the Christian soil from the Turks,<sup>32</sup> while Raymond of Aguilers, a chaplain attending the First Crusade, does not mention any initiator at all, either the pope or anyone else.<sup>33</sup> Ralph of Caen (bef. 1079–after 1130), a Norman cleric writing about 1118 under the house of Hauteville, similarly refers to the apostolic sermon stirring the *princely souls* around the world.<sup>34</sup>

The sources thus seem to offer a reconciliatory middle course. They agree that the pope was the person to engage the Christian leadership, the princes and their armies, whose involvement was the decisive factor for the outcome of the expedition. The emergence of the horde of pilgrims, more likely to hinder the achievement of the religio-political aims than to contribute to it, was not a theme of primary interest.

At the same time, the notion of a popular movement remains or becomes insistent in popular vernacular tradition and later historiography. In the first surviving version of the *Chanson d’Antioche* from around 1180, the crusade is initiated by Peter the Hermit, who receives orders from Christ in a vision.<sup>35</sup> Beside popular poetry, Albert of Aachen, a meticulous and informative secondary source, mentions popular initiative and Peter the Hermit, a self-authorized preacher who stirs up the papal enthusiasm to launch the

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<sup>31</sup> “His temporibus maxima multitudo de Italia et omni Gallia et Germania Ierosolimam contra paganos, ut liberarent christianos, ire cepit. Cuius expeditionis dominus papa maximus author fuit. Nam et in praeteritis sinodis studiosissime de hac expeditionis praemonuit, eamque eis remission peccatorum faciendam firmissime commendavit. ... Unde et a quampluribus Dei ordinatione et de inspiratione ipsum iter inceptum fuisse credebatur. Nimium tamen simpliciter innumerabilis multitudo popularium illud iter arripuerunt, qui nullo modo se ad tale periculum preparare noverunt vel potuerunt,” Bernold of St. Blasien, *Chronica*, ed. Georg Pertz. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores 5* (Hanover: Hahn, 1844), 464.

<sup>32</sup> Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana* (see note 11), 119–21.

<sup>33</sup> Raymond of Aguilers begins his chronicle directly with the march through Sclavonia, Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* (see note 11), 235.

<sup>34</sup> Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi* (see note 17), 606.

<sup>35</sup> *La Chanson d’Antioche*, ed. Suzanne Duparc-Quioc. Documents relatifs à l’histoire des Croisades publiés par l’Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres, 11 (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1976), III. 60–84; IV. 93–99.

crusade,<sup>36</sup> as does William of Tyre (ca. 1130–1186), the royal historiographer of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, writing ca. 1185.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

The conventional interpretation, medieval and modern alike, is that crusading was Pope Urban II's great idea. However, the overwhelming popular response to the papal call surprised the ecclesiastic authorities, to the point that the movement almost seemed to slip out of the papal control. This may well be the truth, but the contemporary medieval sources make a clear distinction between the military elite's crusade, which was clearly coordinated by the pope, and popular crusading zeal, which may not have been a fruit of papal inspiration. Whereas the princes' crusade was indisputably launched by the pope, it is likely that a popular movement for a mass pilgrimage had swelled up even before the papal preaching of the First Crusade in 1095.

Consequently, another possible interpretation is that the pope gradually *gained* power over a popular movement, having found suitable leaders and provided a legal form for it. According to this interpretation, the historical tradition of the crusades provides another example of the rise in papal power at the turn of the twelfth century. The papal success in harnessing a new mass movement to serve ecclesiastical objectives was no minor effort.

The emergence of the ecclesiastically-approved historical tradition for the crusading movement was paralleled by the rising claim for papal authority, resulting in a series of clashes with lay rulers, as well as the reformation of the Western Church. For its part, Benedictine historiography supported the papal demand for the *plenitudo potestas*, the plenitude of spiritual as well as temporal power, and this basic premise of papal overlordship had a further manifestation in the monastic documentation of the First Crusade.

The anonymous *Gesta Francorum* did not, of course, contest papal authority at the head of Christendom. The only actual "defect" of the text was to mention

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<sup>36</sup> According to Albert, a certain hermit Peter during his visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, had a vision in which Christ urged him to take up arms against the infidel. Thereafter Peter turned to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who gave him licence to preach the crusade. On his return to Europe, Peter also managed to convince the pope, who, inspired by Peter's example, planned his journey to Gaul in order to launch the crusade. Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana* (see note 28). 2–9.

<sup>37</sup> William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens. Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 63 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), 126–27, 130.

the stirring of Frankish hearts before the papal appeal. In a context in which the pontifical claim to the plenitude of power was attacked on several fronts, crusading was seen as an important resource to increase papal prestige. It was thus essential that the anonymous writers' description of the beginning of the phenomenon, if indeed seen as an authoritative primary source, was to be corrected at short notice by several venerable ecclesiastics, one archbishop and one learned abbot among them. Their prompt effort is a proof of the papacy's attempt to monopolize, as far as possible, the communication channels of the crusade,<sup>38</sup> and concentrate the control over the movement in papal hands.

The view of the Church had to become prevalent, a process that would be greatly assisted by the provision of appropriate historical interpretation of the campaign and an assertion of its authenticity and authority over other possible claimants. The role of the *Gesta Francorum* as an original source may have remained undisputed, but as a primary source it was divested of authority by its ecclesiastical contemporaries.

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<sup>38</sup> Sophia Menache, *The Vox Dei: Communication in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 51.

Csaba Németh

# Fabricating Philosophical Authority in the Twelfth Century: The *Liber Egerimion* and the *De septem septenis*\*

## Introduction

*Auctoritas* is, as defined here in a literary and technical sense, a concept embodied in a phrase that is quoted for its argumentative force, from a named author (or source) who is considered an authority in and by himself. In most cases, the source of the *auctoritas* is known and accessible: it is therefore beyond debate, although the interpretation of the *auctoritas* can be debated.<sup>1</sup> The present paper investigates the anomalies of the written *auctoritas* and the problems surrounding it, whether the cited *auctoritas* is virtual or forged, through two related cases: the “virtual” book called *Egerimion* and the twelfth-century treatise *De septem septenis*.

The *Liber egerimion* belongs to the virtual authorities: from the Carolingian period onwards it was assumed to be a Greek book about deification, an assumption based on the interpretation of a line in Martianus Capella’s fifth-century *De nuptiis*, which has been repeated in the glosses to that text. *De septem septenis* is a twelfth-century philosophical-theological treatise, unusual both in form and content. It promises cognition of the divine things and presents an ample selection of *auctoritates*. Many of these quotations are highly unusual for the Carolingian period: they are supposedly taken not only from Augustine and Hermes Mercurius, but from Dorotheus, Plato, Aristotle, Parmenides, Heraclitus physicus and Pythagoras. When the first [printed] edition appeared in 1848 the treatise attracted little interest, and that largely confined to the last chapter on cosmological-theological doctrines. So far no attempts have been made to explain the function of this work or to investigate its use of *auctoritates*. The present paper takes a plausible approach to this

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1 See Alan of Lille, *De fide catholica* I, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina* (or *Patrologia Latina*, hereafter PL), 210: 333 A: “Sed quia auctoritas cereum habet nasum, id est in diversum potest flecti sensum, rationibus roborandum est.”

treatise, arguing that the work known as *De septem septenis* is a twelfth-century attempt to (re)create the (*Liber*) *Egerimion*, a book of ascent, and as such, an attempt at philosophical mysticism of a particular type. The investigation into a few *auctoritates* of the fourth chapter of the *De septem septenis* gives an insight into the construction of this work. Here the most exotic *auctoritates* of Dorotheus, Plato, Aristotle and Hermes Mercurius are quoted (or forged) by the author himself, from pre-existing material. Thus, the *De septem septenis* makes a most unusual case study: a virtual book, an *auctoritas* that had never existed, inspired someone to realize the work, a project that involved the forgery of *auctoritates* to make it a reality.

## Martianus and the Book Called *Egerimion*

From the Carolingian period to the twelfth century, the *De nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae* of Martianus Capella was both regarded as an inspiring literary work and used as a textbook of the seven liberal arts.<sup>2</sup> The chosen style made the work very difficult to read, since

Martianus writes a baroque and convoluted Latin often of extreme obscurity. ... particularly in Books 1 and 2, he uses a florid style, overloaded with abstract nouns, with imagery and word-play ... the result is often a torrent of words which obscure rather than reveal his meaning.<sup>3</sup>

The obscurity of the text demanded major hermeneutic efforts: its exegesis began in the Carolingian age and led to the emergence of the legendary book

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<sup>2</sup> Editions: *Martianus Capella. Edidit James Willis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1983); *Martianus Capella. Edidit Adolphus Dick* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1925); *Martianus Capella. Franciscus Eyssenhardt recensuit* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1866); *Martiani Minei Felicis Capellae, afri carthaginensis, de nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii et de septem artibus liberalibus libri novem*, ed. Ulrich Friedrich Kopp (Frankfurt a. M., 1836). On the work and its reception, see William Harris Stahl, *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts. The Quadrivium of Martianus Capella*, vol. 1 (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971), esp. 55–71, and Danuta Shanzer, *A Philosophical Commentary on Martianus Capella's De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii, Book 1* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Browning in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature II: Latin Literature*, ed. E. J. Kenney (Cambridge, London, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 766.



called *Liber egerimion*.<sup>4</sup> In order to understand its genesis, a philological digression is necessary.

The *De nuptiis* begins with a hymn to Hymeneus, the god of marriage, sung by Martianus himself (I, 1). The subsequent prose section (I, 2) introduces the younger Martianus, who demands an explanation of the song after hearing it. His father answers with a difficult sentence, but it is clear that he is baffled by the seeming ignorance of his son, who is expected to know something.<sup>5</sup> Our concern is with the identity of that “something.” Modern printed editions state that he is “perspicui operis egersimon noscens.”<sup>6</sup> The first part of this phrase, “perspicui operis,” is interpreted as a possessive genitive, meaning that the son knows the *egersimon* of a crystal-clear work (“perspicui operis”). Furthermore, this work is identified as the father’s composition. But what is the “egersimon” of the father’s work? Modern scholarly interpretations of the term (here as restored by Hugo Grotius<sup>7</sup>) diverge wildly, from “hymn to Hymeneus,” “awakening song or morning song,” “reveille” or “motivation for” the work, to its “opening passage,” “incipit,” or its “awakening potential.”<sup>8</sup>

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4 For the manuscripts of the commentary tradition on Martianus, see Cora E. Lutz, “Martianus Capella,” *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries, Annotated Lists and Guides II*, ed. P. O. Kristeller and F. Edward Cranz (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1971), 367–81 and its later additions.

5 Modern editions give different forms of the sentence. Willis gives “ne tu inquam ‘desipis admodumque perspicui operis ἐγέρσιμον <non> noscens creperum sapis, nec liquet Hymenaeo praelibante disposita nuptias resultare.” ed. Willis (see note 2), 2 (“non” is interpolated by Willis). Earlier editions (as Dick, Eyssenhardt, and Kopp) read it as a question: “ne tu inquam ‘desipis admodumque perspicui operis ἐγέρσιμον noscens creperum sapis?’” See ed. Eyssenhardt (see note 2), 2; ed. Kopp (see note 2), 11–12.

6 The emendation of Willis, “non noscens” instead of “noscens,” does not conform to the manuscript tradition or the medieval interpretation, nor does it find favor with modern commentators: see e.g., Shanzer: “The *non* is better left out. Since the point is that the son is being especially dense because he *has* become acquainted with the *egersimon*,” Shanzer, *Commentary* (see note 2), 55.

7 The restoration is based on *De nuptiis* IX, 911, *tunc egersimon ineffabile virgo concludens*.

8 An acceptable modern translation of this sentence, by Shanzer, is: “‘Surely,’ I said, ‘you are being foolish and, though you recognize the reveillé of a work that is clear as day, show a twilight understanding of it,’” Shanzer, *Commentary* (see note 2), 202. For the interpretations of the sentence (involving that of the term itself) and its literature see most recently Pedro Manuel Suárez Martínez, “In Martianum Capellam II: *egérsimon*,” *Exemplaria classica: Journal of Classical Philology* 11 (2007): 145–56, collecting five modern translations (online, last accessed on June 20, 2012): [http://www.unioviedo.es/pmsuarez/\\_private/In%20Martianum%20II.pdf](http://www.unioviedo.es/pmsuarez/_private/In%20Martianum%20II.pdf);

Romeo Schievenin, “Il prologo di Marziano Capella, and “Egersimos”: Risvegli e resurrezioni,” in id., *Nugis ignosce lectitans: Studi su Marziano Capella*. Polymnia. Studi di Filologia Classica, 12 (Trieste:

The medieval reading of the sentence was different. Instead of *egersimon*, the reader found (usually in majuscule Greek script) another word: *egerimion* (and its various, distorted variants).<sup>9</sup> The grammatical resolution, and therefore the meaning of the clause, was also different. “Perspicui operis” was thought to be a qualitative genitive form (referring to *egerimion*), meaning that the son knows the *egerimion* which has clear elaboration (“perspicuum opus”).<sup>10</sup> The medieval meaning of *egerimion* derived from literary studies. The context suggested to Carolingian scholars that it must be some sort of literary work; they also read EGERIMION (or its variants) as a Greek word, with the ΩN ending of the plural genitive. They were certainly aware of analogous cases in which books had a similar title structure, such as (*libri*) *Georgicon*, *Epodon* or *Metamorphoseon*. These hermeneutic efforts led to the creation of a virtual book called (*liber*) *Egerimion*.

The earliest glosses on Martianus’ text, written by anonymous Carolingian authors, presented interpretations derived from the nuptial context. According to them, “Egerimion” meant songs, or the law of marriages, or a certain book on weddings, dealing with the weddings of the gods or the elders.<sup>11</sup> Far more influential were the interpretations of Eriugena (d. ca. 877) and Remigius of Auxerre (d. ca. 908). Both assumed that *egerimion* referred to a book, and both derived its meaning from Greek etymologies. Eriugena resolved that the word was a plural genitive form (“surrectionum vel mutationum”) and added that the Greeks called *egeirimia* a fable, which told of the transformation of

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Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2009), 1–17 (esp. 9 n. 31) and 19–29. See also Kopp’s notes in his edition (see note 2), 11–12, and Shanzer, *Commentary* (see note 2), 55.

<sup>9</sup> Kopp’s commentary (see note 2) gives the greatest number of variants. Printed editions before Grotius’ emendation (1599) give *egeiromnémeion*.

<sup>10</sup> Compare the paraphrases of Kopp and Eriugena, both typical for their respective periods: “Totius loci sensus hic esse videtur: Martianus pater filium corrigens profecto insipis, inquit, qui excitantes versus, quos prooemii loco declamavi, audisti, et nihilominus fingis te ignorare praeclarum opus, quod moliar,” *De nuptiis*, ed. Kopp (see note 2), 12; “Est sensus: Miror cum opus perspicuum de mutatione hominum in deos notissimum tibi sit, cur non liquido perspicis meum propositum esse de nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii,” Eriugena, *Annotationes in Marcianum*, 4, 15, *Iohannis Scotti Annotationes in Marcianum*, ed. Cora Elizabeth Lutz (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1939), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous Carolingian gloss, Ms. Leiden Vossianus Latinus Folio 48 (dated ca. 830–840), fol. 2r, annotations on ETEPIMION: “s<cilicet> carmina;” “legem nuptiarum divinarum vel seniorum” (interlinear); “fuit enim egerimion liber i<d est> nuptiarum in quo continebantur deorum nuptiae et amor nuptiarum” (marginal). See *Carolingian Scholarship and Martianus Capella: The Oldest Commentary Tradition*, *Digital edition*, 1st ed. November 2008, ed. Mariken Teeuwen et al, online at <http://martianus.huysgens.knaw.nl/> (last accessed on May 20, 2012).

men into gods.<sup>12</sup> Remigius gave a similar etymology, but with more explanation, stating that among the Greeks there existed a book called *Egerimion* (*liber Egerimion*), written about deification and explaining how humans become deified and how they attain the dignity of gods.<sup>13</sup> The same idea of ascent and theosis is also present in the so-called Anonymus Cantabrigiensis gloss, although no book is mentioned in that case.<sup>14</sup> In succeeding centuries, exegetical literature on the *De nuptiis* preserved and perpetuated these ideas. The obscure text of Martianus was often accompanied by explanatory glosses, not only those of Remigius and Eriugena, but anonymous glosses. Collections of these circulated, all of which were variations on the same theme: there is a Greek book called *Egerimion*, written on “apotheosis” (or “ascensio”, “mutatio”, “deificatio”).<sup>15</sup> Some glosses explained that this deification meant an assimilation to God through virtue; a gloss from the eleventh century even emphasized the elegance of the book.<sup>16</sup> All these interpretations (apart from

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**12** Eriugena’s commentary (on 4. 14): “ΕΓΕΙΠΙΜΙΟΝ (mss.; Lutz: ΕΓΕΠΟΙΜΟΝ) surrectionum vel mutationum, ΕΓΕΙΠΙΜΙΑ (mss.; Lutz: ἐγέρσιμα ἐγέρσιμα) quippe a Grecis dicitur fabula composita de mutatione seu resurrectione hominum in deos, et derivatur a verbo ἐγείρωμαι, id est surgo vel moveor,” Eriugena, *Annotationes in Marcianum*, ed. Lutz (see note 10), 5. Cf. Ms. Cologne Dombibliothek 193 fol. 2r, annotation to ΗΓΗΠΙΜΙΟΝ: “surrectionum vel mutationum hominum in deos.”

**13** “ΕΓΕΡΙΜΙΟΝ id est surrectionum vel ascensionum sive mutationum. Egerimo Grecum verbum est, id est surgo. Est enim egerimion liber apud Grecos de apotheosia, id est deificatione, ubi refertur qualiter homines deificati sint et in deorum surrexerunt dignitatem,” Remigius, *Commentum* (on 4. 14), *Remigii Autissiodorensis commentum in Martianum Capellam. Libri I-II*, ed. Cora Elisabeth Lutz (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 70.

**14** “Anonymus Cantabrigiensis” of Lutz (s. IX), Mss. Cambridge Corpus Christi College 153 fol. 70rb and 330-II fol. 2r, annotations to ΕΓΕΡΙΜΙΟΝ: “ΕΓΕΡΙΜΙΟΝ id est ascensionum quia .ΕΓΕΡΟ. ascendo.” (interlinear); “id est ascensionum hominum in deos transeuntium <id est> Mercurii et Philologiae” (marginal).

**15** For a typical gloss, see the anonymous gloss of Ms. Cambridge Corpus Christi College 330-I (s. XI–XII) fol. 1r, annotation to ΕΓΕΡΙΜΙΟΝ: “egerimion vocatur liber ap<ud> grecos, qui narrat elevationes hominum ad deos. Egerimo grece surgo.” Ideas of Eriugena and Remigius were also combined, as another anonymous gloss, unlisted by Lutz, gives the marginal annotation to the word ΕΓΗΡΟC ΕΓΕΡΛΑΜΙΟΝ (an unusually distorted form of *egerimion*) and reads, “Egerimia a grecis fabula composita de ascensione sive mutatione hominum in deos a verbo egerimas, id est surgo vel moveor. Egerimion apotosia, id est diificatio [sic] ut homines dii facti sunt. et hoc loco significat ascensionem philo<logiae> et musarum in celum,” Ms. Paris BN lat. 6280 (s. XII), fol. 73v.

**16** “Id est resurrectionum. Est vero Egerimion liber apud graecos de apotheosi, et est sensus: Cum, inquit, audieris ‘hymenaeum praelibantem’ id est praegustantem ‘disposita,’ scilicet carmina et cum tibi notus sit liber ille Egerimion elegantissimi et perspicui operis apud grecos, cur ‘creperum sapis,’ id est dubitas de nuptiis deorum me velle loqui, cum audias Hymenaeum

the earliest ones), whether edited or unedited, bear witness to the strength of the *Egerimion* tradition. A few interpretations, all from the twelfth century or later, go further by naming the author of the book. The so-called Berlin commentary, the gloss of Alexander Nequam (d. 1217), and the anonymous gloss of Cambridge Trinity B. 1. 29 attributed the *Egerimion* to Socrates.<sup>17</sup> With the twelfth-century attribution to Socrates, the virtual book reached the zenith of its authority.

The virtual existence attained by the *liber Egerimion* is exceptional but not unique. Two more examples can be mentioned from the twelfth century. According to the *Didascalicon* of Hugh of Saint-Victor (ca. 1096–1141), Socrates wrote twenty-four books on ethics and Pythagoras wrote a book entitled *Matentetras on the quadrivium*. Strangely enough, the anonymous *De VI rerum principiiis* even “quotes” from a *Matentetras* on the position of the mathematicians.<sup>18</sup> In this case too, myth is dispelled by philology. The notion of the

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‘nuptias resultare,’ id est resonare,” Annotation to “egerimion” from an anonymous gloss, Ms. Bern Bürgerbibliothek 331 fol. 1–91 (s. XI), *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum bibliothecae bernensis* 1, ed. J. R. Sinner (Bern, 1760), 301–31; here 302. For the dating see Charles H. Lohr, *Aristotelica Helvetica: Codices descripsit Carolus Lohr*. Scriptorium Friburgiense, Sonderband, 6 (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1994), 160.

<sup>17</sup> “Es NE, inquam, dubius, TU, dico, NOSCENS (id est cum sepe perlegeris) EGERIMION (illum librum Socratis), librum, dico, OPERIS (id est tractatus) ADMODUM PERSPICUI (id est valde perspicui). EGERIMION dicitur liber quidam a Socrate editus, in quo egit de deificatione hominum quomodo homines bene vivendo deificari meruerunt,” Berlin commentary (s. XII) I: 4. 13 (2. 11), *The Berlin Commentary on Martianus Capellas’s De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, Book I, ed. Haijo Jan Westra. *Mittelateinische Studien und Texte*, 20 (Leiden, Cologne and New York: Brill, 1994), 34. The so-called Ps.-Bernardus Silvestris commentary (see below) lacks the point attribution. The Nequam gloss says, “Egerimon liber est Socratis, et interpretatur liber resurrectionum. et est de apotheosia, id est deificatione; ibi enim docet Socrates, quomodo homines deificari possunt et resurgere de uitis ad uirtutes, de ignorancia ad scientiam.” Ms. Cambridge Trinity College R–14–9 (James nr. 884, s. XIV), fol. 39v, as transcribed in *Alexander Neckam. Commentum super Martianum*, ed. Christopher J. McDonough. *Millennio medieval*, Testi (Florence: SISMEL, 2006), 17. The anonymous gloss of Ms. Cambridge Trinity B. 1. 29 (noted by Lutz and dated as s. XIII) writes (fol. 146ra): “An legis egerimion, id est librum illum de apotheosi, id est de anime edificatione [later hand, corr. marg: deificatione]. Ille namque fuit liber So<cratis> in quo docuit qualiter homines fierent semidei, quod nil aliud est nisi ducit [corr. docetur] homines virtutibus in anima diis poss<un>t assimilari. Quod enim animam habent in hoc diis similes sunt, quod vero luteum corpus, in hoc dissimiles.”

<sup>18</sup> *Didascalicon* III, ii: “hic etiam Pythagoras Matentetradem (codd.; *Mathen tetrados*, ed. Buttimer; *Machematetrados*, ed. PL) fecit, id est, librum de doctrina quadrivii, et Y ad similitudinem vitae humanae invenit.” *Hugonis de Sancto Victore Didascalicon de studio legendi*, ed. Henry Buttimer (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1939), 49 = PL 176, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 765D. Cf. *De VI rerum principiiis*: “In Matentettrade mathematici mundum superlunarem

book by Pythagoras was created by Hugh himself; his account is based on the creative misunderstanding of another passage of the *De nuptiis* in the commentary tradition.<sup>19</sup> These virtual books are still only curiosities compared to the *Egerimion*. Socrates' books on ethics and the *Matentetras* of Pythagoras appear only in the above-mentioned cases, whereas there are numerous references to the *Egerimion*. It must be conceded, however, that with one exception, all these references are found in the interpretations of *De nuptiis* I, 7. The sole exception known to me is in the treatise *De septem septenis*.

## The Egerimion and the *De septem septenis*

The *De septem septenis* is a remarkably obscure work in many ways.<sup>20</sup> Its author is unknown, although it has been attributed to John of Salisbury (ca. 1115–1180) or Robert de Courson (ca. 1155–1219) in the past. Given the sources used in the treatise, it may be roughly dated to the second half of the twelfth century. The form and the content of the work are also awkward and have no parallel in the period. The beginning of the treatise announces the intention of the work, to lead the soul “upwards” from human to divine things and wisdom. The text

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tempus vocant propter celescium corporum cursum et motum, sublunarem vero mundum temporal,” “Liber Hermetis Mercurii Triplicis de VI rerum principiis,” ed. Theodore Silverstein. *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 22 (1955): 217–302; here 268, and recently as *Hermetis Trismegisti De sex rerum principiis*, ed. Paolo Lucentini and Mark Damien Delp. *Hermes latinus*, tomus II. *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis*, 142 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 172. This reference combines *Didascalicon* I, vii and III, ii.

**19** The passage is *De nuptiis* II, 44, 20–21, “An aliud illa senis deieratio qui *μα την τετραδα* non tacuit?” (with Scaliger’s emendation), see *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. and ed. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 190; “Liber Hermetis,” ed. Silverstein (see note 18), 224–25 and Delp’s “Introduction” in *Hermetis Trismegisti* (see note 18), 104 sqq.

**20** The treatise exists in two manuscripts with many identical passages: (C) Ms. Cambridge Corpus Christi College 459 fol. 99r-107v (s. XIII); and (H) Ms. London British Library Harley 3969 fol. 206v-215v (s. XIII/XIV). The *editio princeps* is based on H: “De septem septenis,” *Joannis Saresberiensis postea episcopi carnotensis opera omnia*, vol. V: *Opuscula*, ed. J. A. Giles (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1848), 209–38, reprinted by Jacques-Paul Migne, *PL* 199 (Paris, 1855), 945–65. The manuscripts and the printed edition are regularly misrepresented in manuscript repertories, as in Lynn Thorndike and Pearl Kibre, *A Catalogue of Incipits of Medieval Scientific Writings in Latin. Revised and Augmented Edition* (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1963), 271; Palémon Glorieux, *Répertoire des maîtres en théologie de Paris à XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1933), 237; Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540*. Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 534. In the examples I use a collated text.

of the treatise is divided into seven chapters (“septenae,” meaning “units of seven”), each including seven subjects. The subjects are diverse, covering the “seven modes of erudition,” that is, various dispositions to learning (chap. 1); the seven liberal arts (chap. 2); the seven openings of the human head through which sense perception occurs (chap. 3); the seven cognitive forces of the soul (chap. 4); the seven virtues, caused by the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (chap. 5); the “seven ways” of contemplation (chap. 6), and ultimately, the seven “principles of things” (chap. 7), namely God, the matter, the form, the created spirit (equated with “nature”), and three celestial motions—the “law of the stars,” the “world,” and the “machine of the world.”

A treatise of such mixed content and without any context, written by an unknown author from the twelfth century and truncated in the printed edition, does not seem a promising subject of research. It is known that the *De septem septenis* takes extensive paragraphs from other twelfth-century works,<sup>21</sup> but no interest has been shown in its function or meaning. Most commonly scholars use it as a source for generic twelfth-century illustrations, which accompany its rich and varied content.

In order to understand what the *De septem septenis* is and the function of the exotic *auctoritates* in this work, the opening passages of the first chapter require special attention. Here the author creates a dramatic contrast between “the Greeks and Chaldeans” and “the Latins.” Greeks and Chaldeans looked for wisdom and found it, he says, while the Latins looked for truth and failed to find it (which is a rather unusual position for a work written in Latin for a Latin audience).<sup>22</sup> The following section of the work explains why Chaldean works (whatever they are) are held in such high esteem: there are certain divine things which “manifest and expose themselves to the cognition,” but because of their subtle and difficult nature, almost everyone finds them inscrutable. These “divine things” are nothing other than the primary principles of things, accessible only in the “very famous writings” (“praeclara scripta”) of the Chaldeans.<sup>23</sup> Having firmly established the superiority of Greek and

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21 The sources include the anonymous *Liber Hermetis de VI rerum principiis*, the *Commentum (Librum hunc)* of Thierry of Chartres, the *Summa sententiarum* of Odo of Lucca, the *Dragmaticon* of William of Conches, the *De contemplatione* of a Ps.-Hugh of Saint Victor, and Hugh of Saint Victor’s commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy*.

22 “Caldei et Greci sapientiam querunt, Latini ueritatem inquirunt. Illi querunt et inueniunt, quia mores cum scientia componunt. Isti inquirunt et non inueniunt, quia disputationis pocius cauillationi quam ueritatis inquisitioni insistent,” *Septena* I. H fol. 206v (= PL 947C), C fol. 99r.

23 “Hec prima rerum principia, id est, rerum cause latentes et cognitiones dicuntur. De quibus preclara caldeorum tantum scripta ad maiorem ueritatis euidentiam scrutantur.” *Septena* I. C fol. 99v, H fol. 207r (=PL 947D).

Chaldean works, the author starts to beautify his own text by giving supposed Greek etymologies of words related to “wisdom.” Wisdom is “Pallas,” that is, “new,” it is also called “Minerva or Athena,” that is, “immortal,” and also “Tritonia,” that is, “three-fold knowledge” (“trina nocio”). These etymologies are followed by an exposition of how wisdom rejuvenates and makes immortal those who seek it. The wisdom (“Tritonia”) is called three-fold knowledge because the *Engerimion*, that is, the “book of awakening” (“liber surrectionis”), opens up to the human soul illustrated by wisdom, and it acquires from the book the necessary knowledge to ascend through seven *septenae*, to the divine things and achieve the three-fold knowledge of human, angelic and divine natures.

These lines of the first chapter, I believe, give an indication of the probable purpose of the treatise. The text states explicitly at its outset that the path to wisdom is the book *Engerimion* with its seven *septenae*, and the rest of the treatise expounds those seven *septenae*. The term *septena* is uncommon in medieval philosophical literature (this treatise seems to be the only work that uses it). The only plausible exposition is that in this case we have a self-reference: the treatise now known as *De septem septenis* is the *Engerimion*, or more precisely, a work written *to be* the *Engerimion*, a book of ascent.

The author of the treatise certainly knew the tradition of the *Liber Egerimion*, and even the source of his knowledge can be identified. The etymologies of Pallas, Minerva and Tritonia came from one particular commentary on the *De nuptiis*, the twelfth-century (Ps.–?) Bernardus Silvestris commentary.<sup>24</sup>

De VII septenis, septena I C fol. 99v, H fol. 207r (=PL [see note 20], 948 A)	(Ps.–?) Bernardus, <i>Comm. in Mart.</i> 6, ed. Westra (see note 24)
Sapientia Pallas, id est “noua” dicitur, quia. VII. modis eruditionis as eam scandens innouatur; Minerua uel Athena, id est “immortalis” uocatur, quia uerbo et opere eam sequens ad immortalitatem rapitur. Hec Tritonia, id est “trina nocio” nuncupatur,	Sapientia quoque Pallas, id est “nova” dicitur, que semper ad propectum scandens novatur. Minerva uero uel Athena “immortalis” inter- pretatur. “Min” enim idem est quod “non;” “erva” “mortalis.” Tritonia autem “trina notion” interpretatur, quod significat trinam contemplationem et trinam actionem.

<sup>24</sup> See *The Commentary on Martianus Capella's De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii Attributed to Bernardus Silvestris*, ed. Haijo Jan Westra. Studies and texts, 80 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1986), 89–90 and 134.



The continuation of the text, with the explanation of *Engerimion* (a variant of *Egerimion*), draws on a different part of the same commentary:

[De VII septenis, septena I, continuation]	(Ps.–?) Bernardus, <i>Comm. in Mart.</i> , ed. Westra (see note 24), 4
quia humano animo sapientia illustrato engerimion, id est surrectionis liber aperitur, in quo ab humanis ad diuina surgere VIItem septenis eruditur et ad trinam – humane scilicet nature, angelice et diuine – nocionem ascendere perfectius instruitur.	NOSCENS EGERIMERION] Id est cernens hunc librum qui ita inscribitur, librum, inquam, OPERIS (id est tractatus) ADMODUM (id est valde) PERSPICUI. Egeria interpretatur surrectio, de homine ad deum scilicet. [...] EGERRIMINION est surrectionis liber, quo ad divinam naturam ab humana surgere erudimur. Unde etiam a quibusdam “apotheosia” inscri- bitur, quod Latini dicunt deificationem.

The last passage may provide a partial explanation for the particular structure of the *De septem septenis*. The book *Egerimion* includes a treatise “of very clear structure” (“tractatus valde perspicuus”), and the structure of the *De septem septenis*, the matrix of seven times seven elements, may be an exemplary realization of that *opus perspicuum*.

## The Construction of Greek and Chaldean Authorities

The opening passages gave the program for the *De septem septenis*: it must be a work of ascent, through seven *septenae*. It also gives a framework for the content. Non-Latin authorities, presented as the praised writings of Greeks and Chaldeans, appear in two places: in the fourth and the seventh *septena*. The former discusses cognitive faculties, the latter presents doctrines about God and cosmological principles. In these two chapters, the author’s compositional technique differs from that used in the other chapters, where he transcribes large blocks of text without giving the sources: now the author wants us to believe that eminent authorities support his positions.

The present study investigates a few *auctoritates* from the hitherto uninvestigated fourth chapter. It includes the following *auctoritates*: first, a definition of sense perception (C only) from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*; then Hermes (in H; Aristotle in C) tells us that Eternity is the mother of the soul; Plato informs us that the soul is composed from the identical, the different, the undivided and the divided substances (C and H); and Dorotheus adds that the soul is



composed from its cognitive forces (H only). After this we have an allegory of the limbs of the soul as taught in the *Phaedo* of Plato (C and H), then we learn how the soul uses its instruments from a *Liber electionis* (C and H), and finally Hermes gives the medical-physiological background of sense perception (H only). Five of these *auctoritates* will be examined here. All are flawed in the same way, in that existing texts are attributed to existing authors, but those authors have not authored the texts attributed to them.

## 1) “Aristoteles ait”

Manuscript C of the *De septem septenis* gives a definition of sense perception, supposedly from the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle. The *auctoritas* has multiple flaws. Although twelfth-century readers might have been familiar with Aristotle’s name and some of his works, the *Metaphysics* was not readily accessible in Latin translation. Furthermore, those Latin translations of the *Metaphysics* which are extant contain no such definition, as it is not part of the original either.

De septem septenis C fol. 102r	William of Conches, <i>Dragmaticon VI</i> , ed. Ronca et al. (see note 25), xi, 3
Ut Aristoteles ait in suis Metaphisicis, <u>Sensus est animati corporis exterioris applicatione mutation non leuis</u> . Hinc quinquepertitus est, qui quia corporeus est, corporea sentimus .V. modis: uidendo, audiendo, odor<ando>, gust<ando>, tangendo.	3. Aristotiles igitur in suis METAPHYSICIS sic sensum diffinit: Sensus est animati corporis applicatione exteriorum non leuis mutatio. Sed quomodo in omni sensu sit exteriorum applicatio et quomodo animatum corpus inde mutatur, tractando de unoquoque dicemus. Sensus diuiditur in quinque, uidelicet uisum, auditum, olfactum, gustum, tactum.

In this case, the definitive source of the *auctoritas* can be traced. It is a twelfth-century work, the *Dragmaticon* of William of Conches (ca. 1100–1154). William took his definition of sense perception from the *Quaestiones naturales* of Adelard of Bath (ca. 1080–ca. 1150), another twelfth-century author, and attached to it the name of Aristotle.<sup>25</sup> The author of the *De septem septenis*

<sup>25</sup> See *Guillelmi de Conchis Dragmaticon philosophiae*, ed. Italo Ronca, Lola Badia, and J. Pujol. Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 152 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 217; cf. *Quaestiones naturales*, qu. 13, in *Adelard of Bath: Conversations with his Nephew; On the Same and the Different, Questions on Natural Science, and On Birds*, ed. and trans. Charles Burnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 114. In Burnett’s translation, “[t]he definition of sensation, as it

copied the entire *auctoritas*, both the sentence with the name of the author and the source, from the *Dragmaticon*. This example is exceptional, in that it was William who created a Greek *auctoritas*, not the *De septem septenis* author, but it sets the pattern for the *auctoritates* investigated here: sentences from Latin sources (even contemporary ones) are “sold” under prestigious or exotic non-Latin names.

## 2) “Liber electionis”

In the *Book of election* (*Liber electionis*), explains the text of the *De septem septenis*, there is something written on sense perception: namely, that the soul cognizes subjects, sometimes by itself, sometimes through bodily instruments. In the latter case, the soul accommodates itself so much to these instruments that it perceives the subjects according to the instruments. This theory of cognition is clarified by an analogy: if someone looks at written letters through a piece of glass, the letters will appear to have the color of the glass.

The flaw of this *auctoritas* is that in a twelfth-century context, the term “book of election” univocally points to a particular genre that has nothing to do with epistemology. In medieval astronomical literature, “book of elections” (usually in its plural form as “liber electionum,” but also “liber de electionibus”) is the usual title for manuals discussing katarchic astrology. The subject of these works is “elections,” the determination of the best moment to undertake different activities.<sup>26</sup> Books of elections (like those of Zahel and Haly Imbrani) appeared in the West in the first half of the twelfth century, after an extensive corpus of Arab astronomical writings had been translated into Latin. The title “liber electionis” as used in *De septem septenis* might refer to such a book, but it is more plausible that it was chosen to add the weight of a scientific, astronomical authority to the sentence. Without the title, the sentence shows a striking similarity to Thierry of Chartres’ (d. ca. 1156) commentary to the *De Trinitate* of Boethius, the *Commentum* (or *Librum hunc*): the *De septem septenis* author

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seems to me, is a significant mutation in an animate body caused by contact with outside objects.”

<sup>26</sup> See Charles Burnett, “Astrology,” *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Frank Anthony Carl Mantello and Arthur George Rigg (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1996), 369–82.

simply paraphrases Thierry's text in reverse order.<sup>27</sup>

De VII septenis H fol. 209v (= PL 952CD); C (partly) fol. 102v	Thierry of Chartres, <i>Commentum</i> II (see note 27), 2–3
In libro uero electionis inuenitur scriptum de modis actionum eius sensualium. Anima quandoque per seipsam, quandoque corporeo instrumento res comprehendit.	3. Anima uero duobus modis res comprehendit. Quandoque enim se ipsa pro instrument utitur. Quandoque uero corpore pro instrumento fungitur.
Conformat enim se suis adeo instrumentis, ut quale fuerit instrumentum res ipsas modo consimili comprehendat. Ut si uitro interposito l<itte>ras inspexeris: cuiuscunque coloris sit uitrum: litteras tibi uidere uidearis.	2. Anima huius nature est ut suis semper se ipsam conformet instrumentis. Quod sensus etiam corporeus apertissime declarat. Si quis enim vitro rubeo vel coloris alterius vitro imposito litteras inspiciat, rubeas quoque vel cuius coloris vitrum extiterit videbitur sibi uidere litteras. Adeo vis intima sensus corporei obstanti vitro se ipsam conformat.

### 3) “Dorotheus”

The next *auctoritas* introduces a certain Dorotheus, who defines the soul as a “virtuale totum” composed from its cognitive forces. The anthropological reference here attributed to “Dorotheus” must be flawed. The name of Dorotheus can evoke only one author, the Hellenistic astrologer Dorotheus of Sidon, and later in the treatise a “Dorotheus astronomus” appears as author of another, probably forged, *auctoritas*.<sup>28</sup> The work of Dorotheus, the *Carmen astrologicum*, is a pragmatic, technical work on astrology: it was not accessible in Latin, and its text contains nothing resembling the quotations attributed to him.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Thierry, *Commentum super Boethii librum De Trinitate* II, 2–3, in *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and His School*, ed. Nikolaus M. Häring. Studies and texts, 13 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1971), 57–121, here 68. For another use of the source cf. *Septena* VII (PL 199, 961C) with *Commentum* II, 39 (above: *Commentaries*, ed. Häring, 80–81).

<sup>28</sup> See *septena* VII, H 241r (= PL 960D), C 105r: “Dorotheus (H: Dorotheus astronomus), Omnia ab eterno in deo connexa unum sunt: actu uero plura, inter se diuersa sunt, quia pluralitas eorum que communia sunt ab unitate illa que deus est descendit.”

<sup>29</sup> See *Dorothei Sidonii Carmen astrologicum*, ed. David Pingree (Leipzig: Teubner, 1976), containing the extant Latin fragments and an English translation of the whole work.

The probable source of the sentence belongs to another genre. In early-twelfth century works of logic, the term “virtuale totum” is not unusual. It was used in discussion of a specific problem, namely, the different ways “whole” (totum) can be predicated of various subjects. The soul, consisting of its various functions (virtutes, potentiae), was a common example of “virtuale totum”, that is, a whole “concerning functions”<sup>30</sup> The following text parallel, an anonymous extract from William of Champeaux’s (ca. 1070–1121) commentary on the *De differentiis topicis* of Boethius, may serve to demonstrate the usual context of the term.<sup>31</sup>

De VII septenis H fol. 209v (= PL 952C)	Ms. Orléans Bibl. Mun. 266, p. 76b, transcribed by Iwakuma (see note 31)
Ex tali eius compositione Dorotheus eam sic describit, Anima est quoddam virtuale totum ex illis comprehendendi uirtutibus compositum.	Est autem virtuale totum ut anima ad suas potentias, scilicet vegetabilem, sensibilem, rationalem. Haec quoque non constituent animam ut partes in quantitate, sed informant animam. [...] Anima quoque, quod est totum virtuale, ad suas potentias constare, quia ex eis et per eas informatur plene et integre dicitur.

The names “Liber electionis” and “Dorotheus” brought to the sentences the authority of astrological sources. The choice makes perfect sense if one considers that in that period Chaldeans were known for their astronomical-astrological science. The quotations labeled with *Liber electionis* and *Dorotheus* may well represent those famous writings of Chaldeans mentioned at the beginning of the work.

<sup>30</sup> See Boethius, *De differentiis topicis* II (PL 64: 1188BC) for the division between *totum ut genus* and *totum integrum*; his *De divisione* gives four kinds of *totum* as *continuum*, *universale* and *ex quibusdam virtutibus* (PL 64: 887D–888A). The quoted text of B10 (see below) divides that *totum integrum* into *definitivum totum* and *virtuale totum*. For a similar discussion by Abelard (dividing *totum* into *continuum*, *incontinuum*, *universale* and *virtuale*) see his *Introductiones parvulorum* 6 [de divisione], in *Pietro Abelardo. Scritti di logica*, ed. Mario Dal Pra. 2nd ed. (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1969), 193–94.

<sup>31</sup> The commentary (referred to as B10) is in Ms. Orléans Bibl. Mun. 266; the section above transcribed in Yukio Iwakuma, “Pierre Abélard et Guillaume de Champeaux dans les premières années du XIIe siècle: une étude préliminaire,” *Langage, sciences, philosophie au XIIe siècle: Actes réunis par Joel Biard* (Paris: Vrin, 1999), 93–123; here 116.

4) “Plato in Phedone”

Although the soul is incorporeal, it is still formed in the likeness of the human body, Plato supposedly teaches us in his *Phaedo*. This statement is followed by an allegory, so that the boundaries of the *auctoritas* cannot be distinguished: the soul’s head is immortality, its eyes are reason and intelligence; its mouth is discernment and its four limbs are the four cardinal virtues (the fuller text is given by C).

The *auctoritas* is severely flawed, for several reasons. Twelfth-century readers might have had access only to the three Platonic dialogues in Latin: the incomplete fourth-century translation of *Timaeus* by Calcidius, and the recent translations of the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, executed by Henricus Aristippus around 1156. None of these translations, not even that of *Phaedo*, includes the analogy the *De septem septenis* attributes to Plato. Moreover, this “Platonic” doctrine cannot be found in Latin works on Plato’s doctrines, or in the authentic works of Plato. In fact, his name was probably used simply to give authority to the sentence. The first half of the sentence thus has a remarkably close parallel in the (Ps.–?) Bernardus commentary. While the allegory may be the author’s own invention, the definitions of reason and discernment also come from the commentary and are found only a few lines away.

De VII septenis C fol. 102r, H fol. 209v (= PL 952C)	(Ps.–?) Bernardus, <i>Comm. in Mart.</i> 6, 573–76, ed. Westra (see note 24), 148
Hinc Plato in Phedone [H: Phedrone], Anima etsi incorporeal sit, ad similitudinem tamen corporis quodam modo effigiata est.	Sciendum est animam, etsi incorporea sit, ad similitudinem tamen corporis quodam modo effigiatam. Habet quidem humanum corpus superium suum, id est caput uniforme, inferius autem in duo crura, quibus terre affigitur, divisum.
Caput eius immortalitas. Oculi, ratio et intelligentia. Ratio uis innata animo, unionem et differentiam in rebus comprehendens.	(Ps.–?) Bernardus, <i>Comm. in Mart</i> 6, 624–27, ed. Westra (see note 24), 149 Non est autem idem discretio quod ratio. Ratio enim vis innata animo unionem et differentiam in rebus comprehendens;
C: Os eius discretio. Discretio diuersorum crescit id est usu et experientia rerum temporalium	discretio uero usu et experientia rerum temporalium comparata cautela.
H: Discretio uero usu et experientia rerum temporalium comparata cautela, unde	

De VII septenis  
C fol. 102r, H fol. 209v (= PL 952C)

(Ps.–?) Bernardus, *Comm. in Mart.* 6, 573–76, ed. Westra (see note 24), 148

comparata cautela. Quatuor discrecio diuersorum cresis  
principales uirtutes, manus dicitur.  
eius et pedes.

## 5) “Aristoteles” or “Mercurius Hermes”

The most convoluted example of forged *auctoritas* is a longer passage demonstrating to the reader that the various cognitive powers form one single substance, the soul. The two manuscripts give slightly different *auctoritates* to support this doctrine. The unedited Ms. C gives the credit to Aristotle, while the edited Ms. H attributes it to “Mercurius Hermes;” the latter Ms. amplifies it by adding that wisdom is said to be mother of the soul (“siche”). The continuation in both manuscripts gives an etymology followed by the doctrine that wisdom created the soul, giving her reason, intelligence and immortality.

De VII septenis  
C fol. 102r

De VII septenis  
H fol. 209v (= PL 952AB)

Iste namque uires coeunt ita in substantiam,  
quod una sunt anima. Ad hoc autem euidentius  
ostendendum Aristoteles dicit:

Iste namque uires ita coeunt in sub<stanti>am:  
quod una sunt anima. Ad hec autem euidentius  
ostendendum [952B] dicit Mercurius Hermes,  
Sapientia dicitur mater siches.

Endelichia quasi *endor elichia*, id est eternitatis filia—scilicet sapientia creauit sichen [H: sichem],  
id est animam, dans ei a se, non de se, rationem, intelligentiam et immortalitatem.

Contrary to its intended appearance, the *auctoritas* does not derive from Aristotle or Hermetic sources. The notion that the soul (“siche”, that is “psyche”) is the daughter of Endelichia (“entelekheia”) goes back to Martianus Capella. He states (*De nuptiis* I, 7, 10) that Mercurius wanted to “propose to Psyche, daughter of Entelechia and the Sun” (“voluit saltem Entelechia ac Solis filiam postulare”). The entire *auctoritas* here is concocted from various elements and fragments of the commentary literature on that line of Martianus. Since Eriugena and Remigius, “endor elichia” has been the common etymological resolution for *Endelichia*, meaning “internal age” (“intima aetas”).<sup>32</sup> Here the

<sup>32</sup> See Eriugena, *Annotationes* 7, 10: “Endelichia vero quasi endos ELEKIA (cod.), hoc est intima

text of the *De septem septenis* seems to be confused, as “eternitatis filia” ought to refer to siche (and not to her mother Endelichia—wisdom). Only one source in the commentary literature identifies Endelichia with wisdom: the Bernardus Silvestris commentary. The following section of that commentary may be well the direct source for the *De septem septenis*.

De VII septenis, H

(Ps.–?) Bernardus, *Comm. in Mart.* 6, ed. Westra (see note 24), 143.

Sapientia dicitur mater siches. Endelichia quasi *endor elichia*, id est eternitatis filia –scilicet sapientia creauit sichen, id est animam, dans ei a se, non de se, rationem, intelligentiam et immortalitatem.

Cum itaque non sit eiusdem naturae anima cuius est Deus, non est de eius essentia creata. Ab ipso tamen, non de ipso, immo de nichilo habet esse: Dei enim sapientia creauit eam dans ei a se, non de se rationem, intelligentiam, immortalitatem, atque hoc est quod dicitur Siche filia ENDELICHIE. Siche enim anima [...]. Endelichia vero “intima etas” interpretatur, sapientia vero Dei etas, quasi “evitas,” eo quod absque initio et fine et temporali successione existit. [...] “Intima” vero dicitur ideo, quia ei absque doctrina innata est. [...]. Endelichia ergo est mater Siches, id est Dei sapientia est causa anime non materialis set formalis.

The commentary contains all elements of the purported *autoritas*: wisdom (here the wisdom of God) is the creator and mother of the soul; the same wisdom is also identical with Endelichia.<sup>33</sup> The term “aevitas” of the commentary, referring to Endelichia, “mother of the soul” (“mater Siches”), may explain why the *autoritas* mentions an “eternitatis filia.” The phrase “sapientia creavit ... dans ei a se, non de se, rationem, intelligentiam, immortalitatem” also confirms the commentary as the source. The name of Aristotle may have been chosen for its authority. “Mercurius Hermes,” the choice in the other manuscript, may refer to the *De nuptiis* and its commentary, although in the treatise it also authorizes quotations from the Hermetic *Asclepius*, the *Liber Hermetis de sex rerum principiis* and other, unidentified texts.

*aetas*,” ed. Lutz (see note 10), 10; Remigius, *Commentum*: “Et dicta Endelychia quasi endos lechia, id est intima aetas,” ed. Lutz (see note 10), 76.

<sup>33</sup> Other, more common interpretations for *endelichia* are *perfecta aetas*, *intima aetas*, and *anima mundi* (in Eriugena and Remigius) and *absoluta perfectio* (in Remigius). A less common explanation is given by Ms. Leiden Vossianus 48 fol. 3r: “endelichiae, summa pars animae id est intellectus” and by the Anonymus Cantabrigiensis: “endelichiae id est eternitatis” (Mss. Cambridge Corpus Christi College 153 fol. 70va and 330-II fol. 2r).

The five examples investigated here show the same pattern: the prestigious “Greek” and “Chaldean” *auctoritates* are not “real,” authentic *auctoritates*, nor are they merely invented or created from scratch. They are produced by editing: the author took sentences from existing Latin works and labeled them with known names of non-Latin authors who had a certain authority: “Aristotle,” “Plato” (with his *Phaedo*), “Dorotheus” and even “Mercurius.” It should be noted that some of the works utilized had a very limited circulation in that period. Only four complete copies of the *Commentum* of Thierry of Chartres from the twelfth century are extant, and the (Ps.–?) Bernardus Silvestris commentary exists in one single manuscript (by contrast, more than fifty manuscripts of the *Dragmaticon* were collated for the critical text). These examples suggest that the author took uncommon and not-so easily accessible sources to create some of the more impressive *auctoritates*.

## Conclusion

The *De nuptiis* of Martianus Capella, with its erudite and artificial language, was a constant hermeneutic challenge to medieval readers. In Carolingian times, the exegesis of a particularly obscure passage created the idea of a Greek book called *Egerimion*. The knowledge of this virtual work traveled with the commentaries of Martianus. In the twelfth century an unknown author drew inspiration from the tradition of the mythical work and created his own version of it, the treatise now known as *De septem septenis*. The treatise, like the *Liber Egerimion* of the tradition, deals with an intellectual-moral ascent; even its particular structure creating seven groups of seven items (“septenae”) may be well a transposition of Martianus’ words “perspicui operis.” The exotic character of the book is also kept, as the *De septem septenis* praises (and parades) *auctoritates* that represent Chaldean and Greek wisdom. Scrutiny of some of these *auctoritates* of the fourth “septena” has demonstrated that the most impressive *auctoritates* are flawed. Despite the names and titles attached, the sentences are not Greek or Chaldean in origin. However, they are not total fabrications either. The *auctoritates* investigated are based on identifiable texts (or at least text types) from the philosophical literature of the twelfth-century: the *Dragmaticon* of William of Conches, commentaries to the works of Boethius and the (Ps.–?) Bernardus Silvestris commentary on the *De nuptiis*.

The twelfth-century treatise called *De septem septenis* is certainly the most extraordinary work inspired by Martianus Capella. Based on a Carolingian etymological fantasy of the *Liber Engemirion*, its twelfth-century author did all he could to create a work on philosophical theosis: he created a false perspective



and he used several twelfth-century works under fanciful and exotic names to add a sense of the extraordinary and exotic Greek and Chaldean wisdom to the work. Realizing a Carolingian phantom of a book of ascent, the author of the *De septem septenis* also reached what Martianus did. The idea behind the *De nuptiis* was a deeply philosophical one: “salvation by ‘paideia’.” The *De septem septenis* reaches the same destination, in a medieval framework, in a somewhat less elegant way.



Jill Bradley

# **Adapting Authority: The Harrowing of Hell on Two Romanesque Baptismal Fonts<sup>1</sup>**

## **Introduction**

The Church claimed to derive its authority from God and the Bible, interpreted by Christian writers and theologians,<sup>2</sup> and complemented by (selected) works of classical authors. How this authority was expressed varied, but it had to be seen as lending credibility and moral force, based on learning, tradition or divine revelation. By the twelfth century the Church encompassed many different societies and cultures, some with a long history of Christian belief, others relatively newly Christianized, different societies which were not homogeneous. The Church aimed to reach not only the scholarly, the literate, and the powerful, but also the ordinary, often illiterate, people. This paper will look at one way in which authority was adapted to the circumstances, the culture, and the traditions of society.

## **The Power of the Visual and the Role of Baptism**

Images have a great deal of impact, even in today's highly visual culture. In periods when the literacy rate was low the use of images to get across a message was of enormous importance. People who never came into contact with the written word could be reached by images. Images were used to disseminate Church teachings, and even where Christianity was long accepted and embedded they could bring old and new concepts to life. Religion is just one part of a culture, and a change in religious belief, rather than an official change in religion, is a slow and gradual process in which both the existing culture and the new religion undergo modifications and adapt to each other. Nor were doctrine and attitudes fixed: the relationship between the believer

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<sup>1</sup> The starting point for this contribution was a joint paper given by the author and Dr. Tuula Hockman at the 2010 Authorities Conference in Helsinki. Unfortunately due to other commitments Dr. Hockman was unable to collaborate in the writing of this article. My thanks to her for her many suggestions and comments. My thanks also to Dr. Hannie van Horen and to the editors and other authors of this volume for their comments on earlier drafts.

<sup>2</sup> Including the numerous very influential apocryphal and pseudographical works.

and his God, with the Church as intermediary, changed and developed continually. For the Church's teachings to be accepted, the authority on which these were based had to be both credible and comprehensible. Images could bring to life the words of preachers, make the Bible stories live, and make doctrine real and immediate, so that identification was easier. Because the use of images was limited, few being found outside the church, their impact must have been great. Making something visible made the viewer a witness to the events depicted, thereby giving extra validity and imbuing the image itself with authority—seeing is believing.

The baptismal font has a special place in Christian ritual and especially in missionary or newly Christianized areas. The mass was the central rite of the liturgy and Christian belief, but baptism was the “ticket” to partaking in or witnessing this central ceremony. In this sense baptism was the first and most essential sacrament: without it a person had no entry to the Church, no chance of salvation. While baptism was not a guarantee of Eternal Life, it was a prerequisite, a “rite of initiation in water and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> At best the unbaptized could expect limbo, at worst hell: baptism was the first expression of the Church's authority, not only a rite of passage but a ceremony of inclusion.<sup>4</sup> In another sense too, the font was a threshold: most fonts and baptisteries were found just inside a church and had to be passed to approach the altar. In both spiritual and physical senses the font was the symbolic gateway to a new Christian life. Moreover, baptism was a sacrament for all; fonts, unlike much of Romanesque art, were highly visible and accessible to all entering a church. In other words, they were ideal vehicles by which to convey doctrinal messages to the laity. The images on a baptismal font would surely have had a special impact.

## Christ's Descent into Hell

The account of Christ's descent into hell has never been part of the biblical canon, but it was nevertheless very influential and developed into an authority in its own right, summing up the whole idea of Redemption. The “righteous dead,” from Adam and Eve to John the Baptist, were held in the power of the devil: Christ through His death broke that hold. According to the

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<sup>3</sup> Maxwell E. Johnson, “The Apostolic Tradition,” *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Oxford, New York, et al.: Oxford University Press, 2006), 32–76, 68.

<sup>4</sup> “Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit salvus erit qui vero non crediderit condemnabitur,” Mark 16:16. This and all other Biblical quotations are from the *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*.

legal arguments of the time, by claiming unjustly the man free of sin, the devil forfeited his right to mankind—or at least all those who accepted Christ. The Epistles of the New Testament hint at Christ's descent into hell,<sup>5</sup> and early Christian writers also elaborated on this theme.<sup>6</sup> From about the fifth century the descent is mentioned in the *Symbolum Apostolicum*,<sup>7</sup> and the fifth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople (553) in the ninth charge against Origen laid down an anathema on those denying that Christ descended into hell, so in that sense it can be considered "official" doctrine from the sixth century. Around that time it took on a dramatic form in the Gospel of Nicodemus, generally found in the Acts of Pilate.<sup>8</sup> The early versions of this, two in Latin and one in Greek, seem to be based on Matthew 27:52–53.<sup>9</sup> The narrative of Christ's descent into hell is told by two of these risen dead, eye-witnesses to the event, thus stressing the authority of their account.<sup>10</sup> The earliest surviving visual versions come from the eighth century and are to be found in Rome.<sup>11</sup> The dramatic story was hugely popular, as can be seen from the many versions, several in the vernacular, and the numerous miniatures, mosaics,

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5 1 Peter, 3:18–4:6 (see note 4) in particular "propter hoc enim et mortuis evangelizatum est ut iudicentur quidem secundum homines in carne vivant autem secundum Deum spiritu," and Ephesians 1:19–2:6 in particular "et vos cum essetis mortui delictis et peccatis vestris in quibus aliquando ambulastis secundum saeculum mundi huius secundum principem potestatis aeris." Ephesians 4:9 also asks "quod autem ascendit quid est nisi quia et descendit primum in inferiores partes terrae?"

6 For example St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 9:2, trans. Charles H. Hoole (1885), 9: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-magnesians-hoole.html> (last accessed 15 June, 2012).

7 In the western Church used for baptism. The version given by Caesarius of Arles. For more information see Luiwe H. Westra, "Enigma Variations in Latin Patristics: Fourteen Anonymous Sermons *de symboli* and the Original Form of the Apostles' Creed," *Studia Patristica: Historica, Theologica, et Philosophica, Critica et Philologica*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, vol. 29 (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1996), 414–20.

8 M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament: Translation and Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924). Usually dated to the sixth century. In her book, *Voyages en enfer: De l'art paléochrétien à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions Citadelles & Mazenod, 2004), 128, Monique Blanc dates it to the fifth century.

9 "Et monumenta aperta sunt et multa corpora sanctorum qui dormierant surrexerunt et exeuntes de monumentis post resurrectionem eius venerunt in sanctam civitatem et apparuerunt multis" (see note 4).

10 For the importance of the eyewitness for authority, see Cristian Bratu, "Je, aucteur de ce livre: Authorial Persona and Authority in French Medieval Histories and Chronicles" in this volume.

11 In St. Maria Antiqua and St Clemente.

reliefs, and frescos that depict the scene, not to mention its popularity as a mystery play in the later Middle Ages.<sup>12</sup>

In spite of its relatively late origin and extra-biblical status, it carried great weight as a true and authentic record of Christ's defeat of death and the devil and his freeing of mankind—a sort of codicil to the Biblical Passion. Its adaptability for use in varying contexts is demonstrated by the different treatments, both textual and visual.<sup>13</sup> In the visual versions a difference in emphasis developed between the Eastern and Western Churches, with the former concentrating on Christ's raising of the dead and the latter on His defeat of Satan and rescue of souls from hell.<sup>14</sup> This deviation in emphasis was neither absolute nor immediate: the Utrecht Psalter, made in northern France in the first half of the ninth century, twice shows a gentle Christ figure lifting two figures from a pit,<sup>15</sup> while the Stuttgart Psalter from the same area and period has a very warlike and vigorous Christ storming the gates of hell.<sup>16</sup> It is clear that even at this early date the motif could be used to emphasize different aspects, depending on how this particular authority was used—to declare love or power.

## The Harrowing of Hell on Baptismal Fonts

A number of Church Fathers made a connection between baptism and the three days between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection,<sup>17</sup> so it is not really

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<sup>12</sup> The Towneley (play 25) and York Cycles (play 37), for instance.

Towneley, <http://machias.edu/faculty/necastro/drama/towneley/index.html> (last accessed on 20 June, 2012); York, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5666590> (last accessed on 20 June, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Notable is the difference in the treatment of Eve in the Coptic Pseudo-Bartholomeus, where she is set over all righteous women, and in the Old English version in Oxford Bodleian Library, Ms. Junius 11, in which she may not leave hell until she has confessed her blame and must make a plea to Christ as his ancestress.

<sup>14</sup> For an overview of the early works and the Byzantine development see Anna D. Karksonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

<sup>15</sup> Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Ms. 32, f. 8r and f. 90r.

<sup>16</sup> Stuttgart, Württembergischer Landesbibliothek, Ms. 23, f. 16v.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Ambrose of Milan, *De Sacramento*, Book III, in *Translations of Christian Literature, series III: Liturgical Texts*. Trans. T. Thompson:

[http://www.archive.org/stream/stambroseonmyste00ambr/stambroseonmyste00ambr\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/stambroseonmyste00ambr/stambroseonmyste00ambr_djvu.txt) (last accessed on 20 June, 2012); John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Homily 2.22*, in *Christianity in Late Antiquity – 300 – 450 C.E. A Reader*. Trans. Bart D. Ehrman and Andrew S. Jacobs (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): <http://www.scribd.com/justinketchup/d/81293836/15-John-Chrysostom-Second-Baptismal-Instruction> (last accessed on 20 June, 2012); Cyril of

surprising that it should be found as a motif on baptismal fonts. In many ways it encapsulates the doctrine of salvation in very simple terms: Christ rescues mankind from hell. By accepting baptism one had the chance to escape hell. In fact, at least in the Romanesque period, the motif was by no means as popular as other subjects. There are ten known fonts with this motif in northwest Europe and Scandinavia, but what is remarkable is their geographic spread—one is found in Germany, one in France, one in England, and the remaining seven in Sweden.<sup>18</sup> Clearly the subject was felt to be especially appropriate to the Swedish situation. Constraints of space make it impossible to analyze the iconography and context of all ten fonts; here the fonts of Bro and Eardisley will be considered. They have been chosen to consider the Swedish and the Western European situation because their limited iconographic programs and good state of preservation facilitate a brief comparison, but also because they are both parish churches that were probably built not very long before the font was installed.<sup>19</sup> The treatment of the subject and the iconographic context broadcast different messages, showing how visual means were adapted to fit the context and yet give visual authority to the aspect that the Church felt important in that situation, and they display clearly how the same subject was handled in different ways, giving a clue to its relative popularity in Sweden.

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Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catechesis* 2–517: <http://monachos.net/content/patristics/patristicstexts/650> (last accessed on 20 June, 2012). See John F. Baldovin, “The Empire Baptized,” *Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 77–130.

**18** These are Freckenhorst, Brives-sur-Charente, Eardisley, Torsby, Bro, Etelhem, Selånger, Stöde, Hannas, and Löderup.

**19** The font of Etelhem on Gotland is in poor condition. Since all the Swedish fonts except Torsby have been attributed to Gotland masters, Bro seems to be an obvious choice. Sadly the Brives font is badly damaged and is only partially visible, being cemented into the wall of the nineteenth century church. Freckenhorst’s font is in superb condition, but is in the church of a women’s cloister, long established in the twelfth century, and renowned as an educational establishment for girls. For a full description and consideration of its iconographic sources see Stefan Eugen Soltek, “Der Freckenhorster Taufstein,” Ph.D. diss., University of Bonn, 1987 and for its educational function see Kristina Krüger, *Monasteries and Monastic Orders: 2000 Years of Christian Art and Culture* (Potsdam: Ullmann Publishing, 2008), 260.

## Eardisley

Eardisley lies in Herefordshire, on the Welsh Marches, since Roman times a frontier area not just politically but also for several centuries between the Roman and the Celtic Churches. Despite its frontier position, Herefordshire was not remote from English power and politics. Before claiming the throne Harold (1022–1066), the last Saxon king of England, was earl of Hereford. Norman favorites of Edward the Confessor (ca. 1003–1066) were driven out of Herefordshire before 1066, but their castles remained. The new post-Conquest Norman lords of the area enjoyed a good deal of power by virtue of their defenses against the Welsh, who raided even into the twelfth century. They were also conversant with the ambitious church building programs both in the rest of England and in France, and sought to emulate these.<sup>20</sup> Their patronage could have had other than spiritual benefits, allying them to powerful men and asserting lordship over unsettled areas.<sup>21</sup> The church of St. Mary Magdalene, unlike Eardisley castle, the seat of the de Baskervilles, is not mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Survey, nor are there any other indications that it dates from before 1100.<sup>22</sup> It is west of the line that marks most of these earlier churches and was probably one of the many built in the first half of the twelfth century. From a papal bull of 1142 it is evident that the church, along with a number of others on the lands of Ralph de Baskerville (1135–1194), was gifted to the Augustan house of Llanthony Secunda near Gloucester.<sup>23</sup> The Baskerville family would appear to have had a bad reputation and it seems likely that the generous donations were part of a penance imposed by the pope for Ralph's slaying of his father-in-law, Drogo, Lord Clifford, in a duel.

The font is a masterpiece of the Hereford school of sculpture.<sup>24</sup> The bowl has three elements—a harrowing of hell and a *psychomachia*, linked by large lion.

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**20** Malcolm Thurlby, *The Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture*. 2nd ed. (Little Logaston: Logaston Press, 2004), 2–4.

**21** Emma Cownie, *Religious Patronage in Anglo-Norman England 1066–1135*. Royal Historical Society Studies in History. New Series (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1998), 8.

**22** I base this on the details given by David Parsons, “Early Churches in Herefordshire: Documentary and Structural Evidence,” *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Hereford*, ed. David Whitehead. British Archaeological Association Transactions, 16 (Leeds: British Archaeological Association, 1995), 60–74. Parsons does not mention Eardisley; the line between older and newer churches west of this is based on his maps of the churches that show indications of being of early date.

**23** Cownie, *Religious Patronage* (see note 21), 62.

**24** For further details, see Thurlby, *The Hereford School* (see note 20), 123–27; C. S. Drake, *The Romanesque Fonts of Northern Europe and Scandinavia* (Woodbridge and Rochester: Boydell



Both scenes are brought back to essentials: the *psychomachia* shows two knights fighting (fig. 1);<sup>25</sup> the harrowing scene shows the figure of Christ hauling Adam



Fig. 1. *Psychomachia*, Eardisley. Reproduced by kind permission of the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland.

from entangling vines, away from the pursuing lion, while John the Baptist looks on (fig. 2).<sup>26</sup>

The use of the hell mouth was quite common in Western miniatures, replacing the doors of earlier works, and was just appearing in more public works such as the harrowing of hell on the Lincoln frieze. Neither doors nor hell mouth are to be found at Eardisley, nor is there any sign of a devil, graves or sarcophagi. It is almost as if Christ is rescuing Adam from the hell within himself, the worldly toils that hold him from salvation and the threat

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Press, 2002), 19, 28; Folke Nordström, *Medieval Baptismal Fonts: An Iconographical Study* (Umeå: Umeå University, 1984), 50, 132.

<sup>25</sup> Various fonts depict *psychomachiae*: Vermand shows two men in helmets fighting with staves, while Trier has the whole upper register filled with the Virtues triumphing over the Vices.

<sup>26</sup> For an alternative interpretation see R. E. Kaske, "Piers Plowman and Local Iconography: the Font at Eardisley Herefordshire," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988): 184–86. Cf. Jill Bradley, "A Matter of Interpretation: Ideas on the Genesis B Miniatures," *RMN Newsletter*, (May 2011): 15–19; here 16.



Fig. 2 Harrowing of hell, Eardisley. Reproduced by kind permission of the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland.

of the devouring lion.<sup>27</sup> The dove on Christ's shoulder is most probably a reference to the Holy Spirit so that redeemed man could strive to be filled with God's spirit in order to give him strength and guidance.<sup>28</sup> It is possible that the duel between Clifford and de Baskerville was the impetus for the depiction of the two knights fighting, but this has clearly been abstracted, set as a *psychomachia* and part of the general message that was being broadcast. We must assume that Ralph's patronage of his local church did not cease when he gifted it to the Augustan canons, and that the iconography of the font is relevant to the situation—a situation that goes beyond the tales of duels and penance.

*Psychomachiae* traditionally depicted female warrior virtues, overcoming (female) vices, but the two knights are very suitable to a Norman lordship on a hostile frontier.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, it shows similarities with the iconography of the Cîteaux *Moralia in Iob* in the sense of showing the inner struggle of the soul with the imperatives of the body. This work, now spread over a number of manu-

<sup>27</sup> The miniatures of the period frequently show not only the soul caught in the toils of sin, represented by vines, but the threat of being devoured by dragons, lions, and other monsters representing damnation and eternal death. A good example is Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 169, f. 36v.

<sup>28</sup> This is also found on the Brives-sur-Charente font.

<sup>29</sup> There was a Welsh incursion into Herefordshire in 1136, six years before Ralph's grant to Llanthony Secundus.

scripts, was made in the first third of the twelfth century and can be said to represent Cistercian thought, and to a large extent that of theologians of other orders.<sup>30</sup> A Cistercian abbey was founded at Dore, to the south of Eardisley, in 1147<sup>31</sup> and the idea of the fight within the soul was an important subject of doctrine in both England and France—one with which the designer of Eardisley would have been familiar.<sup>32</sup> While it has been generally agreed that Ralph de Baskerville was the patron of Eardisley church and the probable donor of the font, the message expressed is not dictated by his situation, but is one of much wider import. The general pessimism and *mea culpa* attitude of late Anglo-Saxon works, both written and pictorial, had given way to a more optimistic approach to salvation. The Church was preaching the doctrine of responsibility for one's own fate, of the possibility, with God's help, of overcoming one's lower nature. This is a relatively sophisticated idea; the fate of the individual was in his own hands. God offered salvation, but it was up to the individual to take that chance and be worthy of heaven. By commissioning the font with iconography that linked salvation to one's own efforts, Ralph was expressing his adherence and giving visual expression to the doctrine and the authority on which it was based. The Eardisley font encapsulates this message and does so in a way that was relevant to both the situation of the donor and the position, political, doctrinal, and physical of the church itself on the border with a hostile land.

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**30** See Jill Bradley, *You Shall Surely Not Die: The Concepts of Sin and Death as Expressed in Manuscript Art c. 800–1200*. Library of the Written World, 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), ch. 3. Cîteaux manuscripts did not use the motif of the tangled vines to denote the snares of the world and sin, but this was used in both English and (Norman) French manuscripts of the period.

**31** Brian O'Callaghan, "An Analysis of the Architecture of the Cistercian Church at Abbey Dore," *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Hereford*, ed. David Whitehead. British Archaeological Association Transactions, 16 (Leeds: British Archaeological Association, 1995), 94–104. O'Callaghan also points to the use of the abbey to maintain order and presence in an unsettled area of conflicts with the Welsh.

**32** In his letter in praise of the new military orders Bernard of Clairvaux wrote that they fought a double fight, both against flesh and blood and against spiritual evil: "qua gemino pariter conflictu infatigabiliter decertatur, tum adversus carnem et sanguinem, tum contra spiritualia nequitiae in coelestibus," ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series Latina (or *Patrologia Latina*, hereafter *PL*) (Paris: Garnier, 1844–1865), 182: 921C.

## Bro

While Gotland, possibly due to its trading position, probably had more and earlier contact with Christianity than many other Baltic regions, the formal acceptance of Christianity was comparatively recent.<sup>33</sup> Gotland seems to have embraced the new religion with enthusiasm and even to have become a leading producer of baptismal fonts. The font of the church of Bro is one of the seven in Sweden, six coming from Gotland workshops, that depict the harrowing of hell. However, the Bronze Age picture stones and sacrificial wells close to Bro indicate that it was a significant and holy place in pre-Christian times, and building a church there was a form of continuity. While the religion was only a few generations old in the region, the sacredness of place was long established. If much of Europe had an oral culture, at least as far as the general population was concerned, oral and visual elements played an even greater role in Scandinavia. Traditional beliefs and myths were not given written form, as we know them, until the twelfth–thirteenth century, so the oral and the visual played an even greater role than in north-western Europe. It is worth bearing this in mind; traditional authority lay in the spoken word and the images depicting it, rather than in books and written records.

As at Eardisley, the iconography of the cup is confined to three elements, in this case, the twelve apostles, the harrowing of hell, and Michael slaying the dragon, but the treatment of the harrowing scene is very different (fig. 3).

At first sight it seems to be a fairly straightforward version with Christ leading Adam and the other righteous dead from a dark doorway at which a male figure lies, clearly defeated but not trampled, as in most depictions: if the restored polychrome is accurate, this figure is light-skinned, and since it shows no demonic traces in face or form it is probable that there was no original demonization, which could point to Eastern influences. The figure of Christ is of note: in the Western tradition he carries a *crux hastata*, but what makes a very obvious statement is that he wears a chasuble over his long robe. The depiction of Christ as a bishop reinforces the link with the Church, as do the apostles. It is not just Christ who is the means of salvation but Christ by way of the Church; Christ and the heavenly powers are victorious here—the use of Michael defeating the dragon emphasizes this. The Church is identified with the power of Christ. The Church and baptism put the Christian under the protection of a lord more powerful than all others. Unlike the

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<sup>33</sup> See Martin Rundqvist, *Barshalder 2: Studies in Late Iron Age Gotland* (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 2003), 64–80.



Fig. 3 Harrowing of hell, Bro. Reproduced by kind permission of Jos Koldewei.

Eardisley font, no call is made on the Christian other than baptism: by baptism one accepts Christ as one's lord—a powerful lord who has defeated not only his enemies but also those who harm and hold prisoner the unbaptized.

Early writings of missionaries to Scandinavia suggest that Christ was seen as just one god among many, and adherence to the Christian religion was based on gaining the favor of a god more powerful than those of traditional cults. The ninth century Latin *Life of St. Ansgar*, especially chapter 19, is full of how Christ shows himself more powerful than pagan gods.<sup>34</sup> It is this aspect of power that comes to the fore in the cup iconography. The authority of the Church and the Christian religion needed to be recognized: it had to have points at which it touched the existing culture. In the highly masculine culture of medieval Scandinavia the number of “royal” saints—often honored as martyrs—the tradition of power and powerful lords was a starting point. Even though a number of these (royal) saints suffered political rather than religious martyrdom this can be seen as part of the identification with Christianity, a form of making the new religion part of the culture.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of Ansgar's mission in context see Scott A. Mellor, “St. Ansgar: His Swedish Mission and Its Larger Context,” *Sanctity in the North: Saints, Lives and Cults in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Thomas A. DuBois (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 31–64.

<sup>35</sup> For example, St. Olaf, defeated by probably the most influential Scandinavian Christian monarch (Knud the Great), and Knud Lavard, who is depicted on the font at Ballerup in Denmark. Erich Hoffmann, “Die Kuppe des Taugsteins von Munkbrarup: Eine bildliche Aussage über den ‘Märtyrtd’ Knud Lavards?” *Medieval Spirituality in Scandinavia and Europe: A*

While the Eardisley font showed how the Christian should strive to subdue the worldly element in his being and be filled by the spirit of God, the Bro font shows the protection of a mighty lord (in the form of the Church as well as Christ). There is a great deal of difference between the internality of the message on the English font and the externality of that on the Bro font. There is a sense of humility, self-examination, of embracing and being permeated by God's spirit, and striving to improve the self to be seen on the Eardisley font. The vines of the world and the fight of the soul express an internality that was alien to the Scandinavian culture with its contempt for submissiveness, as exemplified by *nið* and the degradation many of these attributed to the female sexual position and passive homosexuality.<sup>36</sup> However the story of Christ's descent into hell to rescue his people is something that could be understood within the bounds of traditional culture: it called for no radical shift in ideas regarding social position or gender attitudes.<sup>37</sup> Making a new religion comprehensible within the framework of existing cultural attitudes requires adjustment. Perhaps it can be said that twelfth-century Scandinavia in some ways resembled Germany and France in the eighth and ninth centuries, but in three hundred or so years Saxons and Franks had internalized Christianity, and their belief had taken a more affective turn, aiming to share and identify with Christ's suffering, as seen in the Crucifixion on the Freckenhorst font in Germany.<sup>38</sup> The Church needed authority for the Christian religion and it had to make that authority comprehensible and credible. The idea of a powerful lord was comprehensible, but the problem was to bring this into the Christian story—to show that Christ was all-powerful, but in a way that made the

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*Collection of Essays in Honour of Tore Nyberg*, ed. Lars Bisgaard et al. (Odense: Odense University Press, 2001), 115–20.

**36** Siân Grønlie, "Preaching, Insult, and Wordplay in the Old Icelandic 'kristniboðsþœttir,'" *The Journal of English and German Philology* 103 (2004): 458–74.

**37** From the later written texts dealing with older beliefs it can be said that women who acted as men, although behaving strangely, could be regarded as praiseworthy, while men who were seen as feminine were despised. See Carol J. Clover, "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe," *Representations* 44 (1993): 1–28. In the same way, in areas in which Christianity was long established, women who were "men in their souls" were praised and seen as above their sex. See Bradley, *You Shall Surely Not Die* (see note 30), 378, 420.

**38** Freckenhorst, a female foundation dating back to the ninth century, has a font depicting the harrowing of hell that is contemporary with both the Eardisley and Bro fonts. The Carolingian depictions of crucifixions emphasized a living and triumphant Christ, inviting the viewer to share a lord's victory over an enemy, rather the suffering and love shown in such later versions as that on the Freckenhorst font.



unfamiliar myths strike a chord with traditional culture. How close was the harrowing of hell to what was already familiar?

The use of pagan motifs in a Christian context can indicate the sort of parallels that were drawn between traditional belief and the new religion.<sup>39</sup> In this the pagan figure of authority—a hero—is transformed over time into a Christian figure. In other words, the authority inherent in a pagan symbol is transferred to the new context. It is not surprising that a major hero was used to make this bridge, as on the Norwegian stave churches of Hylestad and Austed showing Sigurd, hero of the *Völsunga saga*, slaying the dragon, Fafnir. Byock has demonstrated the way in which this motif was used as a parallel to Michael slaying the Dragon<sup>40</sup>—a motif also seen on the Bro font. (fig. 4)

The idea of transforming Sigurd into Michael is fairly straightforward; the hero, whether Sigurd, Christ, or Michael, overcomes the treacherous and evil enemy. Placing this scene on a church portal emphasizes the power to defeat evil and defend the Church and congregation; placing it on a font proclaims the power of baptism. A further parallel could also be drawn between the worldly treasure won by Sigurd and the heavenly treasure promised to the baptized Christian. This sort of parallel and transference is not overly complex; the Church used a traditional figure for its own ends, taking the authority inherent in that figure and making it her own. However, this is harder to envisage with the harrowing of hell, but a clue can be found on two fonts at Norum and Näs that also have a pagan motif, that of Gunnar in the snake pit.<sup>41</sup> The transference and parallels here are more complex and more context-dependent than the Sigurd/Michael transformation.

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<sup>39</sup> It is as well to note that the visual sources mentioned here predate known written sources.

<sup>40</sup> Jesse Byock, “Sigurðr Fáfnisbani: An Eddic Hero Carved on Norwegian Stave Churches,” *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages: The Seventeenth International Saga Conference*, ed. Theresa Pàroli (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi Sull’Alto Medioevo, 1990), 619–28, available online (last accessed on 15 June, 2012):

[http://www.viking.ucla.edu/publications/articles/sigurdr%20\\_fafnisbani.pdf](http://www.viking.ucla.edu/publications/articles/sigurdr%20_fafnisbani.pdf).

He also points out that Michael and the Dragon was particularly popular in the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen, to which Sweden belonged in its early period of Christianity, *ibid.*, 621.

<sup>41</sup> Both these fonts and the Norwegian churches predate written sources of the Sigurd/Gunnar myth. When Gunnar was unable to win Brynhild and free her from the flames surrounding her, Sigurd took his friend’s place and succeeded. Since a magic potion had caused him to forget his earlier love of Brynhild and marry Gunnar’s sister, Gudrun, he pretended that Gunnar had accomplished the rescue. When Brynhild learned the truth she caused Sigurd to be slain. Gudrun’s second husband, Atli, in an attempt to gain Sigurd’s treasure, captured her brothers and threw Gunnar into a pit of snakes where he died.



Fig. 4 Michael slaying the dragon, Bro. Reproduced by kind permission of Jos Koldeweij

In the first instance there is a reason for associating Gunnar with Christianity in the same way as the royal saints: both Norum and Näs were in Norwegian dominated areas: Näs was in Jämtland, Norum in Bohuslän, which was then part of Norway, and Gunnar was the legendary ancestor of the Norwegian royal house. The most obvious and immediate parallel is between the snake pit and the Christian visualizations of hell common at the time, such as can be seen in various miniatures; the right hand side of the portal of St. Trophime in Arles, the Lincoln frieze, and the tympanum of the priory at Anzy-le-Duc, among others, also show serpents as an integral part of the horrors of hell. (fig. 5)



Fig. 5. Hell at the last judgment, tympanum Anzy-le-Duc Priory, detail. Photograph by the author



Moreover, in *Christ and Satan* in the Junius 11 manuscript,<sup>42</sup> which gives an Old English version of Christ's descent into hell, describes it as being the home of adders and serpents. Gary Schmidt has postulated that the "hell mouth itself was a religious symbol that dovetailed with the Scandinavian imagination."<sup>43</sup> He goes on to quote the *Prose Edda*:

On Nástrand [i.e. the "strand of the Dead" within Hell] is a great hall and evil, and its doors face to the north: it is all woven of serpent-backs like a wattle house; and all the snake-heads turn into the house and blow venom, so that along the hall run rivers of venom; and they who have broken oaths, and murderers, wade those rivers.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, the similarities between the Christian concept of hell and the fate of Gunnar were close enough to be recognized. Gunnar among the snakes was part of the (visual) vocabulary and could form a bridge between a pagan and a Christian metaphor. Lindblom suggests that Gunnar playing the harp with his feet is a symbol of Christ's descent into Hell.<sup>45</sup> However, Gunnar is perhaps less satisfactory as a Christian (New Testament) hero than a Nordic one: he resorts to trickery to win his wife, and at least tacitly acquiesces in Sigurd's death. Without the impetus to tie the mythical founder of a royal house to Christianity, Gunnar as a metaphor for Christ is less suitable, especially since Gunnar was unable to save himself, let alone mankind.

Nevertheless the elements, including the visual elements, of the Gunnar myth find their resonance in the story of Christ's descent into hell and form a sort of mental and ideological bridge between the Norse and the Christian myth. Indeed it could be said that the Gunnar iconography prepared the way for the Christian metaphor of salvation. The visual elements of hell were recognizable, but the fate of Gunnar, the pagan sinner, could be contrasted to that of the baptized Christian, the one perishing in hell, the other being freed of the threat of hell by Christ. It is likely that the same motif was used in this way on the tapestry found in Överhogdal in Jämtland, then a *skattland* of Norway.<sup>46</sup> In this tapestry, dated to the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, as well as the scene of Gunnar in the snake pit (top band, left of centre), there

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<sup>42</sup> Oxford Bodleian Library, Ms. Junius 11.

<sup>43</sup> Gary D. Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell: Eighth-century Britain to the Fifteenth Century* (Cranbury, Ontario, and London: Associated University Presses, 1995), 29.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, and note 32.

<sup>45</sup> Andreas Lindblom, *Sveriges konsthistoria från forntid till nutid*, I (Stockholm, 1944), 132; cited in Nordström, *Medieval Baptismal Fonts* (see note 24), 62.

<sup>46</sup> My thanks to Britt Forde, who drew my attention to the Överhogdal tapestry.

are various scenes which have been interpreted as showing the coming of Christianity.<sup>47</sup>

It can be presumed that the Swedish bishops were acquainted with the Gunnar myth, either in its Norse or Germanic form, but any idea of reinforcing royal claims (and certainly Norwegian royal claims), seems extremely unlikely. Indeed it is very probable that they sought an alternative that fitted better with the ideas of clerical independence and the aims of the Gregorian reform movement. "The significance of Gregorianism for the creation of Scandinavian archepiscopacies should not be underestimated. The Scandinavian provinces were from the start directly connected to the Gregorian movement."<sup>48</sup> They needed a metaphor that would emphasize the Christian message and the role of the Church rather than the patronage of a royal house, a metaphor that would state clearly and unambiguously what was the fate of the godly and, by implication, of the ungodly. It had to be one that would be recognizable and would appeal to a population without a long Christian tradition and with a highly masculine culture.<sup>49</sup>

## Conclusion

It is not surprising that Christ's descent into hell was used more frequently on Swedish fonts than elsewhere during this period. The use of the harrowing motif was a powerful means by which the doctrinal message could be broadcast and the authority upheld of both the new religion and the Church that represented it. By making the viewer a witness to the event of Christ's rescue of those in hell, it took the authority on which the message of salvation rested out of the abstract, investing it with immediacy and validity. Both the Bro and Eardisley fonts promise salvation, but the authority of the message was dependent on the context: the one offers freedom from hell through baptism and the mediation of the Church, the other appeals to the individual to join the fight against the evil in himself. The one shows the

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47 M. S. Dimand, "Medieval Textiles of Sweden," *Art Bulletin* 6 (1923): 11–16; here 13.

48 "La signification du grégorianisme pour la création des archevêchés scandinaves ne doit pas être sous-estimée. Les métropolitains scandinaves furent, dès le début, directement liés au mouvement grégorien ....," Gunnar Hardarson, *Littérature et spiritualité en Scandinavie médiévale: La traduction Norroise du 'De arrha animae' de Hugues de Saint-Victor. Étude historiques et édition critique*. Bibliotheca Victorina, 5 (Paris and Turnhout: Brepols 1995), 11.

49 It is also worth noting here that the position of the defeated but non-demonic figure on the Bro font is almost identical to that of Gunnar at Hylestad, reinforcing the idea of transference.

power of the new religion and the importance of accepting baptism into that religion. The other was made for a context in which basic Christian doctrine was not only accepted, but regarded as self-evident—not a message of belief but one of striving for a Christian life. The two fonts display one faith, two contexts, and the primary authority of Christian doctrine using the secondary authority of the familiar.



Robin Sutherland-Harris

# Authority, Text, and Genre in Accounts of Diocesan Struggle: The Bishops of Bath and Glastonbury and the Uses of Cartulary Evidence

## Introduction

The jurisdictional struggle between the bishops of Bath and the monks of Glastonbury, which began in earnest with Bishop Savaric's (d. 1205) attempted annexation of the monastery to the bishopric in 1193, relied heavily on the authority of legal text at a time when the interplay between the written word and oral testimony was altering the shape of English legal procedure.<sup>1</sup> It was in large part through the creation, control, and manipulation of authoritative documents such as charters, cartularies, and chronicles that both sides in the quarrel sought to gain the upper hand. Of primary importance are the thirteenth-century *Libellus de rebus gestis Glastoniensibus* of Adam of Domerham (d. after 1291), which mixes narrative with charter text, and the general cartulary of Glastonbury Abbey, dating from ca. 1338–1340.<sup>2</sup> Both

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1 Michael Clanchy has been instrumental in introducing and outlining the discussion on just how medieval society in England moved from an oral culture to a text-based one. See his seminal work, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, Second ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). It may be worth noting his definition of the cartulary as “a collection of title-deeds copied into a register for greater security” (101), a solid starting point but one which we shall complicate.

2 Adam of Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis Glastoniensibus*, 2 vols., ed. Thomas Hearne (Oxonii: e theatro Sheldoniano, 1727) and *The Great Cartulary of Glastonbury*, ed. Aelred Watkin. Somerset Record Society, vols. 59, 63–64 (Frome: Butler & Tanner, 1947–1956). Adam of Domerham's chronicle is a continuation of William of Malmesbury, and is found with other charter material relating to Glastonbury's holdings in two manuscripts, Cambridge, Trinity College, R.5.33, dated *temp.* Hen. III, and London, BL, Add. 22934, dated after 1313. Hearne based his edition from the Trinity College manuscript, and slightly amended the work's original title. Watkin's edition of the general cartulary is based on two manuscripts, The Marquess of Bath, Longleat, MS. 39 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Wood empt. 1. The first, dating to 1338–1340, is comprised of copied charter material and miscellaneous contemporary additions, while the second, dating 1340–1342, is a fair copy of the first preceded by a short chronicle and followed by a feodary. (See, G. R. C. Davis, *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain and Ireland*. Revised ed. (London: The British Library, 2010), 88.) Hereafter references to Domerham will refer to Hearne's

illustrate a variety of uses and presentations of texts considered to be authoritative in deciding the quarrel. In both cases, the *auctoritas* to which both bishops and monks aspired drew strongly on meanings of the word suggesting production and judgment: the production (or acquisition) of a document which maintained the desired judgment or opinion could convey powerful authority to either party in the quarrel. At the same time, the authorship of these authoritative documents reflects medieval conceptions of the *auctor* as one who develops and cultivates, a conception which implies a notion of the authored (and authoritative) text as anything but static. In examining various layers of documentary detritus left by this struggle over the monastery, the ways in which legal text shifts in response to form, context, and aspiration point to just how *auctoritas* is being understood, shaped, and used.

The ties between authority, as outlined above, and text (especially text of the type that we most often find in cartulary form) as a mechanism of its reinforcement and deployment, suggest that this type of authority can also be related to genre. Modern scholarship tends to understand charters as individual documents transferring property or rights, preserved in their original form, and cartularies as organized compendiums of transcribed charters in codex form; this is reflected in editorial practices and conceptions of the categories or genres to which different types of documentary evidence may belong. To a certain extent these practices and conceptions reflect our own modern uses for and assumptions about legal documentary authority and the genres that best assist it. Medieval society, however, had its own understandings concerning the authority of text and its organization and presentation. As we shall see, what at first appears to be a fluidity between genres that might compromise the legal *auctoritas* of the texts turns out to work towards reinforcing that authority.

In recent scholarship devoted to cartularies, facets such as institutional identity, symbolizations of societal power, and codicological complexity have been emphasized as *additional* to the old legal role of cartularies (which worked to reinforce the authority of certain documentary texts and their possessors) or perhaps even presented as *more* central and relevant to the cartulary's working in the medieval world.<sup>3</sup> In fact, these are elements which

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edition by volume number followed by page number. References to Watkin's edition will refer to document number.

<sup>3</sup> A few representative examples among many: Constance Bouchard, "Episcopal *gesta* and the Creation of a Useful Past in Ninth-century Auxerre," *Speculum* 84 (2009): 1–35; Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, "Diplomatic Sources and Medieval Documentary Practices: An Essay in Interpretive Methodology," *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies*, ed. John Van Engen (Notre Dame:

do not supplant or overtake the role of legal memorialization but rather function as essential contributors to that legal function. Here, using a selection of cartularies and related texts relating to this particularly contentious period in the history of Glastonbury Abbey, I will examine our understanding of the cartulary as a genre of texts, and then move on to consider how the blurring of boundaries between narrative and legal texts and oral and written testimony works to further cement the cartulary as a fundamentally legal text, used to reinforce or undermine the authority of those who struggled for control over Glastonbury.

## Layered Texts, Layered Authority

In 1193 Bishop Savaric, a well connected Anglo-Norman noble appointed to the see of Bath in 1191, persuaded King Richard I (1157–1199), held in captivity by Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI (1165–1197), to write to Pope Celestine III (ca. 1106–1198) in renunciation of his royal patronage of Glastonbury.<sup>4</sup> The king requested that the monastery be annexed to the bishopric as a second see, thereby instituting the dual seat of Bath and Glastonbury (which was to revert to the Diocese of Bath in 1219 and eventually attained its modern title of the Diocese of Bath and Wells in 1245) and bringing the considerable resources of the abbey under the direct control of Savaric himself. Although Celestine authorized the union, King Richard soon thought better of it, and

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University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 313–43; Jennifer Paxton, “Lords and Monks: Creating an Ideal of Noble Power in Monastic Chronicles,” *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe, 950–1350*, ed. Robert F. Berkhofer III et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 227–36; Julia S. Barrow, “William of Malmesbury’s Use of Charters,” *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 67–85.

<sup>4</sup> Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis* (see note 2), 2.352 *et seq.* Savaric de Bohun was a cousin of Emperor Henry VI, and no stranger to politics or ambition. His persuasion of Richard took advantage of his long service with the king—he had taken the Cross with Richard. He used his position as the Emperor’s relation to act as negotiator, a role which gave him the opportunity to arrange for Glastonbury to become a bishop’s monastery. The monk of Glastonbury, Adam of Domerham, included in his thirteenth-century chronicle many descriptions of and documents issued by Savaric, which paint a vivid portrait of the man. The various cartularies of the abbey provide additional documentation. The best modern accounts of Savaric’s role in the struggle for Glastonbury, to which I am indebted, can be found in Dom David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), 327–30; Christopher R. Cheney, *Pope Innocent and England* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1976), 220–25; Antonia Gransden, “The History of Wells Cathedral, c. 1090–1547,” *Wells Cathedral: A History*, ed. L. S. Colchester (West Compton House, Somerset: Open Books, 1982), 28–31.

little was done to cement episcopal control. In 1198 the king, having informed the papal curia that his approval had been obtained under duress and that he had annulled the annexation, summoned the monks to choose an abbot.<sup>5</sup> They chose William La Pie, and he was confirmed as abbot only to have his election quashed by Pope Innocent III (1160/61–1216) in the summer of 1200, Richard having died the previous year.<sup>6</sup> Bishop Savaric styled himself “episcopus Bath’ et Glast’” from 1197, but he was plagued by the complaints of his monks, who wrote on several occasions to the papal curia to accuse him of misusing his power and the abbey’s resources.<sup>7</sup> In England, King John (1166–1216) and the archbishop of Canterbury, Hubert Walter (1160–1205), were also called upon to mediate ongoing disputes between the monastery and the bishop. The situation dragged on beyond the death of Savaric in 1205, and into the episcopate of Jocelin of Wells (d. 1242). Its eventual conclusion was doubtless delayed by the interdict (1208–1214), and it was not until 1215 that John took a step towards settling the issue by giving Bishop Jocelin the right to appoint an abbot at Glastonbury. The complaints of the monks at this decision were echoed by those of other religious houses as well as by the “comites et barones Anglie.”<sup>8</sup> Pope Honorius III (1148–1227) declared that the dual seat should be dissolved in 1219,<sup>9</sup> but the dynamic between Glastonbury abbots and the bishops of Bath remained fraught well into the middle of the thirteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

All parties involved made considerable and strategic use of the written word to bolster their claims. Royal or papal decisions did not necessarily conclusively end the dispute, but to obtain a royal or papal charter was to possess a powerful tool, useful in shaping the larger textual authority of either party. The decisions of popes and kings were variable, and possessing a favorable judgment, or producing a copy of one, was crucial to the persuasive *auctoritas* of either

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5 Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis* (see note 2), 2.376–7.

6 Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis* (see note 2), 2.395.

7 For another, more sympathetic, perspective on Savaric’s actions and character see Charles Wood, “Fraud and its Consequences: Savaric of Bath and the Reform of Glastonbury,” *The Archaeology and History of Glastonbury Abbey: Essays in Honour of the Ninetieth Birthday of C. A. Raleigh Radford*, ed. Lesley Abrams and James P. Carley (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991), 273–83.

8 Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis* (see note 2), 2.428–36; Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (see note 4), 330.

9 Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis* (see note 2), 1.242–47; Cheney, *Pope Innocent and England* (see note 4), 224–25.

10 Many documents attesting to the ongoing struggles concerning temporalities, patronage, and feudal relations between the two remain. See in particular Watkin, *The Great Chartulary* (see note 2), I, 140, 145, 147, 148, 154, 155, which span the years 1218 to 1275.



side. Documentary evidence was copied from charters into cartularies or other codices such as registers so as to preserve its authority in new form. The text of a charter could even be included in codices considered chronicles or histories, as was the case with the *Libellus de rebus gestis Glastoniensibus* attributed to Adam of Domerham, a major source of material pertaining to the quarrel. The *Libellus* was composed in the latter part of the thirteenth century by a monk of Glastonbury Abbey thought to have entered the monastery under Abbot Michael, who was elected in 1235.<sup>11</sup> The chronicle's earliest survival is in a contemporaneous manuscript (Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.5.33, fols 21–73v) and it was also used by the fourteenth-century chronicler John of Glastonbury.<sup>12</sup> In 1727 Thomas Hearne published it together with the copy of William of Malmesbury's (ca. 1095/96–ca. 1143) *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie* which precedes it in the Trinity MS, and it is in this form that it is most widely available today. Adam's chronicle is similar to many composed at English monasteries; it contains a significant amount of material, such as papal letters and other charters, that pushes at the genre boundaries of the chronicle and towards those of the cartulary.<sup>13</sup> These genre boundaries are one of the many challenges in dealing with legal sources. In the *Libellus*, as in the general cartulary of Glastonbury and many other English codices of the time, we see the layering of texts, one inside the other. Legal acts which became text in the form of loose charters and had their authority reinforced and preserved as cartulary copies, are summarized or embedded within chronicle narrative. The relationship between the chronicle (or narrative text) and the cartulary (or legal text) is not sharply divided but is indistinct both in codicological markers of genre and in underlying ambitions as to the use of

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**11** Antonia Gransden, "Damerham Adam of (d. in or after 1291?)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004):

<http://www.oxforddnb.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/article/93>, last accessed on June 21, 2011. As Gransden points out, although the text was attributed to Adam of Domerham in the fourteenth century by another monastic chronicler, John of Glastonbury, it is unlikely that the text is the work of a single author as its composition apparently spans 1247 to 1291 and is written in several hands.

**12** *The Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey: An Edition, Translation, and Study of John of Glastonbury's Cronica sive antiquitates Glastoniensis ecclesie*, ed. J. P. Carley, trans. D. Townsend. Revised ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1985). John used Adam's *Libellus* as his source for the period 1126–1191.

**13** The twelfth-century Abingdon chronicle is another such example. It contains the text of over 150 charters embedded within the chronicle's narrative. See John Hudson ed., *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis: The History of the Church of Abingdon*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xv–ccix.

the text. In each context a given text is subject to a certain degree of editorial treatment as well, made to fit the purposes of its codicological setting (which vary from cartulary to chronicle to printed edition).<sup>14</sup>

Most medieval English cartularies edited between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries were prepared for publication under the basic editorial supposition that a cartulary is, at root, a simple compendium of the important documents to be found in a given monastic archive at the time of its composition. This idea of the cartulary sees them as motivated by a straightforward desire to preserve legal texts for posterity.<sup>15</sup> As such, editors sought to make the cartulary as a codex, reflecting the complexities of medieval documentary organization and legal *auctoritas*, all but invisible, and to provide easy access to the texts of the charters it contained in a way that corresponded to modern conceptions of the authoritative, or at least the useful, text. The charters were themselves seen as unambiguous purveyors of basic facts about medieval life. Late-twentieth and twenty-first century scholars such as Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, Patrick Geary, Constance Bouchard, and others (many associated with the École des Chartes) have complicated our understanding of cartularies. They assert that in many ways cartularies were most powerful in their extra-legal capacity. These scholars have emphasized many functions of the cartulary in medieval society. Jennifer Paxton argues that charters and cartularies were used in post-Conquest England as a means of “solidifying the identity of the monastic community in the present” by anchoring it to the memory of the Anglo-Saxon past.<sup>16</sup> Bedos-Rezak offers several alternative readings for the medieval cartulary as “marginal agents, forgeries, lexically imprecise texts, linguistic ... and semiotic ... mysteries, ineffective legal tools, untrusted evidence, challenged receptacles of memory, ambivalent symbols, ritual objects, or sacred monuments.”<sup>17</sup>

These scholars explore the role of cartularies in asserting and maintaining community identity and abbatial authority, their codicological complexity, and their relationship to a system of signs symbolizing the power and might of the monastery in its societal context. This scholarship has been innovative and

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<sup>14</sup> Very similar relationships between charter text and narrative text are perceived by Jennifer Paxton in her study of the *Liber Eliensis*, “Monks and Bishops: The Purpose of the *Liber Eliensis*,” *Haskins Society Journal* 11 (2003): 18–19.

<sup>15</sup> Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 83.

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Paxton, “Forging Communities: Memory and Identity in Post-Conquest England,” *Haskins Society Journal* 10 (2001): 96.

<sup>17</sup> Bedos-Rezak, “Diplomatic Sources” (see note 3), 314.

rich, and in no way do I suggest we return to the approach of the nineteenth century. However, although new conceptualizations have been put forward, their authors have tended, by and large, to pass over as irrelevant or as a not-very-interesting trope the objective most often given by cartularists themselves. This is the boring old legal purpose—to preserve the memory and authority of legal transactions contained in charter texts for future generations. The preface to Adam's *Libellus*, for example, explicitly gives as its justification the need to record the past in order to provide evidence for the abbey's defense of itself in the future.<sup>18</sup> The reasons for this tendency in modern scholarship are many and valid, motivated by a desire to explore in medieval cartularies the shifting and elusive form and function of authoritative preservation beyond the legal realm. Yet it is perhaps because of this shifting and elusive form that cartularies function so well as quintessentially medieval forms of *legal* documentation.

A cartulary may be defined as a codex comprising transcriptions of legal documents such as grants, quitclaims, and other charters, relevant to the holdings or ambitions of a monastic house or, more rarely, a secular estate. This is good as far as it goes, and is certainly the image we receive from modern editions. Yet modern editions are themselves rather complex constructions. They regularly select and rearrange the text of a given cartulary to create a volume that modern readers will find logical and straightforward, and which will reflect modern conceptions of how legal authority is constructed and presented, thereby potentially compromising our understanding of archival organization and the cartularists' own mentality vis-à-vis the contents. They also often include texts not from a single codex but from a number of sources, compiled in such a way as to present a collection of all the known charter texts for a given monastery in one volume.<sup>19</sup> These textual re-

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<sup>18</sup> "Quoniam universos ecclesiae suae historiam scire monet honestas, inducit utilitas, eo quod rerum praeteritarum concilio in instantibus prudentiam, et in futuris casibus non modicam praebet cautelam, et diuturni temporis decursus res gestas posteritatis notitiae subtrahit, nisi scripturae patrocinio moniantur, aliqua, quae in Glastonia gesta sunt, scribere proposui, et in unum redigere volumen, ut et successuris non ignorentur, et ea, quae scire perutile est, facilius in uno volumine, quam in multis diversisque cedulis, requirantur. Simul etiam accenduntur lectores ecclesiam, olim in Anglia singularis privilegii dignitate gavisam, nunc autem quibusdam libertatibus multisque possessionibus viduatam, aut in statu invento conservare, aut ad meliorem semper provehere," Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis* (see note 2), 2.303–04.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the edition of charters and documents of Salisbury Abbey edited by Jones and Macray in 1891 draws on a number of registers composed between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, *Charters and Documents Illustrating the History of the Cathedral, City and*

structurings of medieval documents have affected the way we think about what cartularies can tell us—what they are sources *for*.

When considering the medieval codices which most resemble our modern edition, we do find volumes that conform to the traditional notion of a medieval cartulary quite closely, such as the fourteenth-century general cartulary of Glastonbury which forms the basis of Aelred Watkin's edition and is called by him the "Great Cartulary."<sup>20</sup> Cartularies such as this one contain mostly transcribed charters from monastic archives, though they also regularly contain calendars, short institutional histories, lists of abbots, and liturgical material as well.<sup>21</sup> One such codex was produced in the 1340s at Glastonbury, and contains a variety of material, namely a brief chronicle, a feodary, a table, and a fair copy of the contents of the earlier general cartulary, plus some later additions.<sup>22</sup> Yet we should not assume that a cartulary, even a very extensive one such as this, contains all the documents available to the cartularist at the time of its production. There are not many medieval charters which survive as originals, uncopied into a codex of some kind, but of those few that do, they are rarely also found transcribed elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> There are several straightforward explanations for this lack of overlap in documentary survival. For example, a monk in charge of producing a cartulary would likely see no need to make transcriptions of charters which had resulted in no lasting profit or legal claim for the monastery.<sup>24</sup> And as David Walker points out, "Archive sense, an appreciation of documents for their own sake, and an understanding of the shape of any particular archive, are not essential for the compiler of a register or

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*Diocese of Salisbury, in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. W. Rich Jones and W. Dunn Macray (London: Printed for Her Majesty's Stationery Office by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1891).

<sup>20</sup> This cartulary dates to ca. 1338–1340 and is part of the estate of the Marquess of Bath. Longleat, MS 39. See also note 2, above.

<sup>21</sup> For example, see *Charters of Sherborne*, ed. M. A. O'Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), which is an edition of BL Add. 46487.

<sup>22</sup> This volume, known as the "Secretum Abbatis" and made for Abbot Walter de Moynton, is presently housed at the Bodleian as Wood empt. 1. It opens with the short chronicle and a table, continues with the cartulary contents as found in Longleat MS 39 and supplemented with later additions, and ends with the feodary: an excellent example of a medieval codex that treats modern genre boundaries as largely incidental. It is partly included in Watkin's *Great Cartulary* (see note 2), and the feodary portion has been published by F. W. Weaver, *A Feodary of Glastonbury Abbey*. Somerset Record Society, 26 (Frome: Butler and Tanner, 1910).

<sup>23</sup> Georges Declercq, "Originals and Cartularies: The Organisation of Archival Memory (Ninth–eleventh Centuries)," *Charters and the Use of the Written Word in Medieval Society*, ed. Karl Heidecker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 149.

<sup>24</sup> Emily Zack Tabuteau, *Transfers of Property in Eleventh-Century Norman Law* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 9.

cartulary.”<sup>25</sup> A cartulary could be focused on a particular type of material, such as letters or leases, and might therefore exclude material deemed irrelevant to its immediate use. The selective nature of such volumes could, in fact, serve to bolster their legal authority, reflecting the aspects of medieval *auctoritas* that relate to conceptions of the *auctor* as one who develops and cultivates a text. Authority could be increased by a carefully constructed textual presentation, as we shall see.

Turning to other medieval codices that tend to get included in modern editions, we are dealing with volumes which can be seen as having purposes and ambitions of their own—indeed, as having legal roles beyond the duplication of archival material, rather than being simple compendiums of charter texts. Registers might be intended for general use within a monastery or they might concentrate on documents only relevant for a particular individual or office-holder, as with the one containing transactions of the abbots of Glastonbury between 1234 and 1291.<sup>26</sup> Seven registers of the abbey survive, all but one of which appear to be specifically associated with an abbot or abbots. They do serve varying administrative purposes, however. A late register dating 1533–1538 details fines paid to the abbot for grants and reversions (London, BL Add. MS 17451), while one from the mid-thirteenth-century lists customaries and extents (London, BL, Add. MS 17450). Deed-books, feodaries, and inventories can occupy a similar grey area. In fact, it can sometimes be difficult to draw the line between register or deed-book and cartulary, just as is also the case between cartulary and chronicle. Chronicles also often contained not just summaries of charter contents but full transcriptions of charter texts amongst the narrative, as was the case with Adam of Domesday’s *Libellus*. Here we are mainly dealing with chronicles that contain a significant proportion of such material, which can be called charter-chronicles.<sup>27</sup>

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25 David Walker, “The Organisation of Material in Medieval Cartularies,” *The Study of Medieval Records: Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major*, ed. D. A. Bullough and R. L. Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 132.

26 Longleat, North Muniment Room 10590. The abbots in question are Michael of Amesbury (1235–1253), Roger of Forde (1253–1261), Robert of Petherton (1261–1274), and John of Taunton (1274–1291). Similar registers, with a wide variety of uses and foci, survive from other English houses. See, for example, the thirteenth-century cellarer’s register of Bury St Edmund’s (London, National Archives, DL 42/5), which is described by M. R. James, *On the Abbey of S. Edmund at Bury* (Cambridge: Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 1895), 96–97.

27 Following, amongst others, *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E. O. Blake (London: Royal Historical Society, 1962), lviii.

## Cartularies as a Genre

“Cartulary” as a genre category might be said to include not just collections of transcribed charters, but registers, certain chronicles, or other legal or administrative codices which include a significant proportion of documentation relating to a monastery’s holdings. The purpose of this genre of texts was, as is argued here, always primarily legal, but can also be related to institutional identities, symbolizations of power, and constructions of communal history. One additional and fundamental quality at play is the duplication, reduplication, recontextualization, and alteration of text. Any given charter, already a textual duplication of a binding legal act, might at some point be included amongst those selected for the institution’s cartulary, or be transcribed into the register of a monastic official, or embedded within the narrative of a chronicle.<sup>28</sup> Beyond that, it might be transcribed again, either from the original or its first copy into a later cartulary, as happened in the case of Glastonbury as well as numerous times in the series of registers and cartularies produced at St Paul’s in London, for example.<sup>29</sup> A charter might, through this process of duplication and reduplication, move beyond its institutional birthplace if included in a chronicle that provided a basis for an author further afield. At each point along the way the text might be altered—irrelevant details omitted, archaic formulae updated—in order to accommodate the new textual communities which constituted, in a sense, the updated witnesses to the original legal act itself. This process may also accommodate the shifting ambitions of various individuals or institutions, and therefore a given text might reinforce the *auctoritas* of multiple (although not usually opposing) claims. Like a set of Russian *matryoshka*<sup>30</sup>, each very much but not exactly like the next, the cartulary presents us with a layering of charter texts and, simultaneously, a layering of the legal authority which inheres within them.

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**28** It is important to note here that the charter itself was not identical with the legal act, but was rather a *record* of that legal act. Bedos-Rezak elaborates on this relationship between text and act: “The referents of such social acts were actual circumstances which were to be remembered in the form of particular lived experiences. Charters articulated and gave meaning to a specific social structure” (“Diplomatic sources” [see note 3], 326). See also Majorie Chibnall, “Charter and Chronicle: The Use of Archive Sources by Norman Historians,” *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to C. R. Cheney on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. C. N. L. Brooke *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1–17.

**29** *Early Charters of the Cathedral Church of St Paul, London*, ed. Marion Gibbs (London: Royal Historical Society, 1939), xi.

**30** Hollow wooden dolls of different sizes designed to nest inside one another.

There were legally motivated reasons for this Russian-doll effect; it was not accidental. In the first place, the transcription of a charter into a cartulary or similar codex is connected with the likely destruction of the original. Perhaps this is because the security of a cartulary copy encouraged medieval archivists to neglect or even destroy the original. In this case, we are faced with the implication that, to the monks in charge of institutional archives, the cartulary copy served just as well as the original as a legal record.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, perhaps certain monasteries recognized the near inevitability of the destruction of at least some of their charters, and their inclusion in a cartulary was pre-emptive rather than dismissive. St Gall, at least, is one monastery whose medieval archives survive largely in the form of original charters, and it has no cartulary.<sup>32</sup> So, by transforming loose originals into a bound codex, either precious legal records were being safeguarded against the all-too-likely eventuality of loss or destruction, or inconvenient loose legal records were being compiled and organized into a format no less legally relevant but much more convenient to use.

If the cartulary genre as it applies to the codices of medieval England is more complex than it appears at first glance, where does that lead us when considering the *Libellus* of Adam of Domerham and other documents concerning the power struggles within the Diocese of Bath and Glastonbury in this light? How should we address the blurring between chronicle (or narrative) texts and cartulary (or legal) texts, and the slippery back-and-forth concerning oral and written testimony? The elision between narrative and legal text is of course not restricted to this particular case, but is evident in other contemporaneous English sources. Such is the case of a codex used extensively by E. O. Blake for the 1962 edition of the *Book of Ely*, which he describes as “planned as a composite work in which documents are subordinated to a narrative history.”<sup>33</sup> The same description could well be applied to the *Libellus*, which neatly frames charter texts with surrounding explanatory narrative.<sup>34</sup> Dealing with such charter-chronicles as this, one finds a number of instances which reveal the legal uses of both themselves and the charters whose transcriptions they contain. When the monks of Glastonbury protested their case before King

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<sup>31</sup> Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance* (see note 15), 82.

<sup>32</sup> St Gall’s charter material is discussed by Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 79–81.

<sup>33</sup> *Liber Eliensis*, ed. Blake (see note 27), lviii.

<sup>34</sup> For example, in detailing how the abbey came into the hands of Savaric, the *Libellus* first gives several folios of extensive narration, which culminate in a letter containing the monks’ first complaint about episcopal control. Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis* (see note 2), 2.358.



Richard, the *Libellus* recounts the steps they took and obstacles they faced in considerable narrative detail, including when and to whom they presented various grants and letters reinforcing their claims, before giving the complete text of the king's letter to the papal curia on the independence of the monastery ("de unione dirimenda").<sup>35</sup> The charter-chronicle includes the legal thrust of the original charters within a more extensive description of the legal context for which they were needed. This has the effect not of reducing the authoritative status of the charter evidence by diminishing the suitability of its setting, but of bolstering it with the strength of the associated narration. By presenting not only the charter text but also a broader legal context which includes specific individuals and legal procedure, the *Libellus* is working to reinforce the authority of the texts it contains. Connecting legal texts to instances in which crucial living witnesses were present and corroborated the written testimony reinforces their legal authority—the charters have been tested and proven. The author clearly seeks to place the final authority with the written documents (perhaps foreseeing a time when no living witnesses to the original charter or the subsequent court case will remain).<sup>36</sup>

The codices related to the struggle between Glastonbury and the episcopate which place less emphasis on narrative than chronicles and charter-chronicles—that is, cartularies, registers, deed-books and so on—nevertheless also blur the lines between narrative and legal text in their quest to assert their authority. The abbey's general cartulary typically groups documents according to the property to which they relate. The documents of this cartulary include material of all types, from papal letters to charters concerning land

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<sup>35</sup> Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis* (see note 2), 2.371–76. Similarly, in the twelfth- to thirteenth-century chronicle of Florence of Worcester, we read an account of a court battle of 1070 in which Bishop Wulfstan eventually triumphs "*justo Dei iudicio ac scriptis evidentissimis*," by a just judgment of God and by evident documents, *English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I*, ed. R. C. van Caenegem. Publications of the Selden Society, 106–07 (London: The Society, 1990–1991), doc. 4.

<sup>36</sup> A similar treatment of charter text is found in the late fourteenth-century *Gesta* of St Albans. In the court case described here, from around 1160, we find the charter text fully embedded, quoted in its entirety. Not only is it presented to the chronicle's reader, it was also, according to the surrounding narrative, read aloud in court and discussed by the litigants (we are given some elaborate speeches). Again, we see the charter text strengthened by association with the legal authority of the court case. We also read that some of the older documents presented by St Albans, which were unsealed by *veteri consuetudine*, the old custom, "seemed to some envious people to be of no value because they were not sealed." Not only are these pre-Conquest documents reinforced by this account of their extensive legal interrogation, but the author of the chronicle seems also to be instructing his readers in just what an authoritative legal document looks like. See *English Lawsuits*, ed. van Caenegem (see note 35), 375.



boundaries, but taken together they follow a broad narrative arc which includes both the general outline of administrative authority as it developed between the two as well as the particular details of how that authority was to be applied in quotidian situations.<sup>37</sup> The cartulary, composed between 1338 and 1340 and thus postdating the *Libellus*, also reverses the usual trajectory of medieval legal texts (from charter to cartulary to chronicle) and includes interpolations taken from Adam of Domerham to expand upon this narrative arc with information external to the documentary texts. One entry reiterates the main points of an earlier document and adds details as to which Glastonbury monks travelled to Rome to present it to the Pope in 1219.<sup>38</sup> By describing the journey taken by both document and monks, and thereby linking the authority of the documents with that of the papal *curia*, this narrative insert serves as a means of insisting on the documents' validity and legal authority, even should the originals be lost and only cartulary copies remain.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to suggestions like those of Paxton (mentioned above), which relate blurred textual boundaries to monastic identity, we would do well to remember that these fuzzy edges between narrative and document also serve legal purposes. Occurring in both chronicle-type texts and cartularies and registers, this elision serves as a confirmation of the validity and authority of a charter, proof that it has been tested and found secure. This proof hinges most fundamentally on creating links not to a particular sense of identity, but rather to older, deeply resonant forms of legal authority, a point to which I will return.

## The Written vs. Oral Evidence as Authoritative

Something notably missing from codices relating to the struggle between the diocese and the monks of Glastonbury is evidence suggesting that such

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<sup>37</sup> See Watkin, *The Great Chartulary* (see note 2), docs. 2–4, 126–61. Documents 2–4, as papal bulls, are grouped with others of their kind, which is highly typical of such cartularies. All other documents have been grouped according to property (as opposed to issuer, for example), with the notable exception of those that concern agreements between Glastonbury and Wells.

<sup>38</sup> Watkin, *The Great Chartulary* (see note 2), doc. 144.

<sup>39</sup> A similar example might be taken from the cartulary of the Burton Lazars, composed in the early fifteenth century, includes a series of transcriptions of charters relating to a dispute which spanned almost the entire twelfth century, concerning the abbey's rights over the manor of Coton. These charters, given in full, are accompanied by, or rather embedded within, a narrative framework, similar to what one might expect to see in a chronicle. See *English Lawsuits*, ed. van Caenegem (see note 35), docs. 567–68.

volumes were themselves produced in courts of the Middle Ages as part of legal proceedings, despite the fact that, as we have seen, most monasteries created and used such books. Most scholars now agree that they were treated with more care—as more important, perhaps, if one can judge—than original charters. Remember that evidence which shows us the use of charters in court is fairly scarce; most court cases relied on living witnesses and oral testimony rather than legal documents and written testimony. It has been persuasively argued by Emily Zack Tabuteau that the main role of charters was to “aid the memory of the witnesses whose testimony constituted the proof.”<sup>40</sup> A legal act, such as a donation of land, would take place before members of the community who might be required to recall its details thirty or forty years later. Just as much time could pass between one court case and another. The charter, as well as the cartulary, was not only records of the transaction but also accounts of the proceedings—who said what, what arguments were presented, what, if any, ritual actions were used in the transfer of property or rights. As such, they provided valuable help for witnesses who needed to recall salient points for their oral testimony. And people did use charters and cartulary records to aid legal decisions outside the courtroom. Amongst the records preserved in the many administrative codices of St Paul’s in London, we find an account in which the inspection of a private charter leads to the renunciation of the plea.<sup>41</sup>

This use of charters and their codex-bound transcriptions as memory aids points us towards the slippery relationship between oral and written authority found in these texts. Oral testimony remained crucial in deciding court cases in medieval England, as it still does today, and the struggle of the bishops to exercise their authority over Glastonbury was no exception. Legal transactions, especially donations to religious institutions, usually took place in public, often in the church, and in the presence of many witnesses. Court cases also took place in the presence of many people. The rulings of kings and popes were made publicly and had many witnesses, and these witnesses contributed to the authority of the written act. Agreements made and legal actions undertaken in such public circumstances were difficult to deny as long as witnesses remained alive. This is confirmed by instances related in cartularies, where witnesses regularly decided the outcome of court cases, with or without the presence of written testimony. In Domesday Book, for example, we find witnesses attesting to the former existence of a charter, and in the largest

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<sup>40</sup> Tabuteau, *Transfers of Property* (see note 24), 212.

<sup>41</sup> *English Lawsuits*, ed. van Caenegem (see note 35), doc. 601.

Glastonbury cartulary, a witness testifies in court to the falsification of a charter by an unscrupulous knight.<sup>42</sup> But the very fact that we learn of the continuing centrality of oral testimony through written records indicates that text too was playing an important role in furnishing testimony. As mentioned, the preface of the *Libellus* explicitly states its goal as the preservation of texts to safeguard Glastonbury's future interests.<sup>43</sup> Even as early as 1189, final concords were mandating terms of agreement that include the provision of charters of confirmation from one party to the other.<sup>44</sup>

Oral and written testimony were both important tools for establishing authority in their own right, as these cartularies, charter-chronicles, and registers attest. They are also mutually aware—they intersect with one another, and the way in which they do this can inform our understanding of medieval legal texts and their purposes. Charter-chronicles and cartularies record the fact that the documents they include were read aloud in court, as was apparently the case in an agreement reached between Edward, Dean of Wells (d. 1284) and Abbot John of Taunton (d. 1291), in which arguments made *per litteras regias* played an important role.<sup>45</sup> Such codices also preserve records of oral testimony which reinforced the claims of charter texts. The *Libellus* frequently mentions the presence, actions, and speech of specific individuals as a means of reinforcing its textual authority. These records not only preserve the details of legal acts and agreements, but also actively create ties between the authority of oral testimony and the authority of the documents they contain. Here the work of Michael Clanchy is especially relevant, as it delineates the shift from an oral (or memory-based) culture to a written one—a shift which was taking place throughout the struggle between diocese and monks.<sup>46</sup> While Clanchy argues that written records gradually overtook memory as a locus of legal and cultural discourse during this time, the process happening here is less straightforwardly evolutionary than one might assume. The authority borrowed from oral testimony points to the legal

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<sup>42</sup> *English Lawsuits*, ed. van Caenegem (see note 35), docs. 67–68, 221.

<sup>43</sup> See note 16, above. Another example occurs as early as 1120. According to the Abingdon chronicle, a serjeant was sent with a charter from the abbey to the earl's court. During the proceedings, the charter was stolen by his opponent, and the case was therefore lost. The chronicle takes care to tell us, however, that the document was later recovered—we are told in no uncertain terms of the importance a written record could have in the absence of witnesses. See *English Lawsuits*, ed. van Caenegem (see note 35), 183.

<sup>44</sup> *English Lawsuits*, ed. van Caenegem (see note 35), doc. 648.

<sup>45</sup> Domesday, *Historia de rebus gestis* (see note 2), 2.569. See also 2.584, in which Abbot John makes his case: “*Per cartam suam, quam profert, et quae hoc idem testatur.*”

<sup>46</sup> In particular, see Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record* (see note 1), 260–66.

purposes which lie behind the construction and composition of codices containing transcriptions of charters. It is to reinforce their claims to legal authority that these connections to older, more culturally embedded forms of legal authority are so painstakingly forged. To return to the analogy of the *matryoshka*, a cartulary is similar to a set of nested dolls that are pointing at one another; there is a necessary referentiality occurring at different levels of document production and reproduction. And it is this that keeps alive, rather than supplants, older oral forms of legal authority.

## Conclusion

Both Bishops Savaric and Jocelin and the monks and abbots of Glastonbury sought authority in the settlement and recording of their dispute. The authority they desired hinged on the creation (or re-creation) of documents that carried arguments or judgments in their favor, and this authority was pursued via a relationship with these legal documents that was considerably more manipulative (in a strictly technical sense) than is our modern practice. Blurred boundaries between narrative text and legal text, and between oral and written testimony, were deliberate and served fundamentally legal aims, being directed towards reinforcing the status of the cartulary (or cartulary-type text) as a legal authority. In the struggle to exert and maintain authority over the abbey of Glastonbury, legal acts were commemorated and reinforced through their purposeful treatment in a variety of codices. Some scholars have seen such textual reworkings and blurred boundaries as more connected to questions of institutional identity, societal signs, and symbols of power, but these elements fall fundamentally within the legal purview of these texts, and the legal status of cartularies, charter-chronicles, and registers was essential to those creating and using them. To put it simply, there need be no separation between goals of signifying social power or creating community identity and goals of creating effective and powerful legal documentation, authoritative not in spite of its apparent fluidity, but because of it. Commemoration is a legal act too, and the institutional identities created through it are legal identities as well, informed and shaped by the legal setting of the cartulary.

Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen

# **“What Jesus means is ...”: The Dominican Order as Theological Authority for Laity and Clergy in Medieval Northern Europe**

## **Introduction**

God was the highest authority of all in medieval Europe. All other laws, rules and regulations in human society, formal as well as informal, one way or the other had to derive from God's will. If they did not, it would be against God, since He had a purpose for all human affairs. Acting against the will of God would put the soul in imminent danger of eternal condemnation, something which nobody in their right mind could wish for or ignore. Furthermore, disobedience to God was not just a private matter, as both good and bad behavior of an individual had an effect on the rest of society. Thus it was of vital importance to medieval Christian society that everyone lived in accordance with God's will.

His will, however, is not always clearly comprehensible to the human mind. For the medieval Europeans, there was a set of available media for learning and understanding the will of God. The basic source of insight was the Bible, in which His most important guidance for mankind, mostly given in the teachings of Jesus Christ, had allegedly been recorded for posterity. In addition to this, a number of Church Fathers and other theological experts had ever since offered their own commentaries and explanations, all of it to the supposed benefit of the rest of Christian society, for everyone to be better equipped mentally to understand the will and the Word of God. Or rather, since God's will cannot really be understood, to believe in what one was told. St. Augustine (354–430) himself admitted that “I could not believe in the Holy Scriptures if the authority of the Church did not force me to.”<sup>1</sup> This is an essential element in understanding the medieval Church, even medieval European life in general, namely that true faith could only be obtained through faith in the Church. Or, as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) put it, the authority of the Church could not be appealed against, because it came from

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<sup>1</sup> “Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas.” Augustinus, *Contra epistolam Manichaei quam vocant Fundamenti*. Liber unus: v, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*. Series Latina (or *Patrologia Latina*, hereafter *PL*) (Paris: Garnier, 1844–1865), 42: 176.

God Himself. It is this divine authority for understanding and communicating God's will to the rest of mankind, which the Latin Church of medieval Europe claimed to possess, that this article will consider. More specifically, the focus will be on one particular group within the Church, the monastic order of the Dominicans, who from the early thirteenth century took the leading role as an authority on theology, and thus on God's will. The article will show how this authority was manifested in various ways by the Dominican friars within Northern Europe.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, a new group of expert theological authorities appeared. The Order of Preachers, *Ordo Predicatorum*, was the idea of a Spanish canon regular, Dominic Guzman (1170 – 1221), and it was approved as a religious order by the pope in 1216. Its immediate aim was to counter heresy, which at that time was widespread in southern France and northern Italy, partly by challenging the often skillful, eloquent and convincing spokesmen for the false beliefs and partly by preaching the Gospel and its true understanding to both Christians and pagans. By these means, Dominic would help to protect people from succumbing to false doctrines. The main idea of the new order was to establish a mobile corps of authoritative theologians, preaching in accordance with orthodox belief as determined in Rome and at the University of Paris—an *Ordo Veritas*, as they were sometimes called—well-trained in theology as well as in the important task of communication. To comply with this, the friars were educated in the priories and a system of internal schools, the most promising minds being sent to the best schools and universities in Europe. Soon the Friars Preachers—or Dominicans or Black Friars, as posterity would come to know them—became an international academic elite in the matter of theology and preaching.

Dominican authority on theology was founded on an institutionalized aim to be such an authority, promoted by a set of constitutions for the Order explicitly endorsing theological studies and preaching. Furthermore, it was based on a general acknowledgement and recognition from the secular Church—popes, bishops, canons and parish priests—without which the Order's self-proclaimed authority would have had no true value. Finally, it was based on recognition and support from lay society—kings, counts, nobles, burghers and peasants—without whom the mendicant friars had no chance of survival. The theological authority of the Friars Preachers was endorsed, expressed and exercised in various ways. For recruitment the Order focused especially on educated people, who already showed basic qualifications for the task. Thereafter each friar was expected to engage in continuous and organized study and training in both theology and preaching for the rest of his life. A vital element in Dominican study, stressed by several masters general and the Order's constitu-

tions, was that such studies had value only if they were used by the friar in his external work afterwards. The accumulated wisdom and authority on theology was communicated to the rest of society through oral and written teaching, through preaching and taking confessions, and through "consultancy" for bishops, princes and other private people who needed advice on some theological matter. The most well-known role of such consultants was as inquisitors fighting heresy. A final element, both providing and expressing authority for the Friars Preachers, was their own lifestyle, as Dominic had realized that one of the best ways to gain respect and credit as an authority was to "practice what you preach," that is, to live as much as possible in accordance with the recommended apostolic life and the Imitation of Christ. The heretic preachers of the Cathars in southern France had been difficult for the Orthodox Church to challenge precisely because they lived a most humble and austere life. Therefore the Dominicans were to live as mendicants, without owning any income-generating possessions.

The first Dominican convent foundations focused solely on university cities, such as Paris, Bologna, and Oxford, where the purpose was to recruit academics for the Order, but from around 1220 to 1250, there was a systematic foundation of a second wave of convents all over Europe, first in archiepiscopal centers, then in ordinary episcopal and some other regional ecclesiastical centers. The initiator was not just the Order of Preachers itself, but the bishops, who generally seem to have welcomed the friars.<sup>2</sup> As an example, the Danish archbishop Anders Sunesen (ca. 1167–1228) was apparently very happy to see the first Dominican friar in Denmark around 1221, stating that this wonderful order should be represented in every diocese of his church province.<sup>3</sup> In 1222 he bought a house for the friars near the cathedral of Lund, where the first priory was founded in the same year, and within the next 25 years his wish had come true throughout the entire province. Even in cities where written documents

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2 E.g. Benedict O'Sullivan, *Medieval Irish Dominican Studies*, ed. Hugh Fenning (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 16–19, 37; Janet P. Foggie, *Renaissance Religion in Urban Scotland: the Dominican Order, 1450–1560*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 95 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 14–15; Bede Jarrett, *The English Dominicans* (London: Chiswick Press, 1921), 3–4; John B. Freed, *The Friars and German Society in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1977), 139; Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle i middelalderens Danmark* (Odense: University of Southern Denmark, 2008), for download on <http://www.jggj.dk/phd-afhandling.pdf>, 141; Jarl Gallén, *La Province de Dacie de l'ordre des Frères Prêcheurs 1: Histoire générale jusqu'au Grand Schisme* (Helsinki and Rome: Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum, 1946), 41–42, 55.

3 *Historia Ordinis Predicatorum de Dacia*. Various publications, e.g. Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen 2007 at <http://www.jggj.dk/HOPD.htm> (last accessed on January 15, 2013).

do not explicitly testify to such a positive episcopal involvement, it is often indicated indirectly: for instance, sometimes the friars were given an old parish church, around which their priory was built, something which could hardly happen without the favor of the bishop.<sup>4</sup>

In some cases, the arrival of Friars Preachers was not simply welcomed by the bishops, but initiated by them. In Poland, Bishop Iwo of Cracow (ca. 1160–1229) selected a group of Polish priests in the 1220s, who were sent to Bologna to meet St. Dominic with a request that he enlist them in his Order, after which they returned to Cracow to found the first Dominican convent in the country.<sup>5</sup> Whereas this was probably a rare pro-active initiative, we do have examples of bishops who contacted the Order of Preachers and asked them to come to their dioceses. In 1229, for instance, Bishop Hugo of Liège (ca. 1165–1229) made such a request, explicitly stating that this was in order to teach his clergy about theology and to spread God's Word in his diocese.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, his two expressed aims seem to sum up perfectly the main reason for the popularity of the Friars Preachers with the bishops in the second quarter of the thirteenth century: to teach theology to the diocese clergy and to endorse preaching in the diocese. These same aims had been explicit obligations placed upon the bishops by the Fourth Lateran Council (canons 10 and 11) in 1215, and for most bishops the Order of Preachers must have seemed as the obvious means to comply. Initiatives like that of Bishop Hugo were apparently expected by the Dominican Order. This is indicated by the wording of the general chapter acts of 1254, where several provinces were granted permission to found one or two new convents, "... if the bishop asks for it and the provincial chapter allows it."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle* (see note 2), 141.

<sup>5</sup> Jerzy Kłoczowski, "Dominicans of the Polish Province in the Middle Ages," *The Christian Community of Medieval Poland*, ed. Jerzy Kłoczowski (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1981), 73–118; here 73.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Simons, *Stad en apostolaat: De vestiging van de bedelorden in het graafschap Vlaanderen ca. 1225–ca. 1350*. Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Letteren, 121 (Brussels: AWLSP, 1987), 115.

<sup>7</sup> "Si episcopus pecierit et capitulum provinciale concedit." *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, vol. 3 (Rome: Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum, 1898), 33.



## Dominicans as Teachers

In episcopal cities and other ecclesiastical centers, Dominican convents were usually established near the cathedral chapters or the major secular church. Here the friars acted as consultants for the bishops and in some cases – as in Utrecht and Västerås—even as vice bishops.<sup>8</sup> Most bishops and canons were quite well-educated themselves, but often mainly in the *artes*, after which the more ambitious ones continued with studies in canon law, whereas theology usually held little interest for the canonry.<sup>9</sup> Thus the primary intended tasks of the Friars Preachers at the cathedrals appears to have been as teachers and consultants for the canons in theology and other ecclesiastical matters, so that the canons could teach it to the parish clergy at the cathedral schools.<sup>10</sup> When in 1221 Bishop Konrad of Metz (ca. 1165–1224) forwarded a circular to his diocese, he expressed a hope that the newly arrived Friars Preachers would not only educate the believers through preaching, but also teach the clergy through theological lecture. Similarly, in 1229 Bishop Hugo of Liège expected the friars to give public *lectiones* in theology in addition to preaching God's Word in his diocese.<sup>11</sup> Similar expectations were expressed in 1246 by Archbishop Juhel of Reims (d. 1250), when he asked Pope Innocent IV (ca. 1195–1254) for a Dominican convent to be founded next to the archiepiscopal center, so that the friars could instruct the secular clergy.<sup>12</sup>

Whether this pious episcopal ambition was fulfilled is less clear. We have little concrete evidence of any local Dominican teaching of the canons at the cathedral chapters, and none whatsoever of Dominican teachers directly allocated to the cathedral schools. But we do have a solid stream of evidence that no other social group in medieval society felt as connected to the Friars Preachers as the cathedral canonry. They made donations and acted as a recruit-

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8 Utrecht: Menno Brada, *Dominicanen in Utrecht: "Na de preek van 1579"* (Leusden: Ansfried, 1983), 55; Västerås: *Diplomatarium Danicum*. 2. ser., vol. 9 (Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, 1946), no. 468.

9 Jarl Gallén, "De religiösa ordnarnas, särskilt Dominikanordens, studier i Skandinavien under medeltiden," *Historica IV: Föredrag vid det XVIII Nordiska historikermötet, Jyväskylä 1981*. *Studia Historica Jyväskyläensia*, 27 (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 1983), 13–28; here 23.

10 E.g. Isnard Wilhelm Frank, *Hausstudium und Universitätsstudium der Wiener Dominikaner bis 1500*. *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte*, 127 (Vienna: Hermann Böhlau, 1968), 54–55; Edward Tracy Brett, *Humbert of Romans: His Life and Views of Thirteenth-century Society* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), 13; Simons, *Stad en apostolaat* (see note 6), 115.

11 Frank, *Hausstudium und Universitätsstudium* (see note 10), 54–55.

12 Brett, *Humbert of Romans* (see note 10), 13. Simons, *Stad en apostolaat* (see note 6), 115.

ment pool, and there are also records of general social contact. In Denmark, for instance, canons secular constitute 22 % of all registered donors to the Dominican convents in the Middle Ages, around 40 % in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> In some cases it was the canons themselves who took the initiative in calling for Friars Preachers, rather than bishops or others. In 1224, Provost Willem van Le Plouich wrote a letter thanking the Dominican prior provincial of Francia and the convent in Paris for consenting to establish a convent in his home town of Lille. After just three months the foundation had been implemented, the cathedral chapter had donated a building plot, and the local count—the provost's brother—had agreed to finance the whole project.<sup>14</sup> The first attempt to establish a Dominican convent in Scandinavia was also initiated by a provost, Gaufred of the cathedral chapter in Sigtuna, who was apparently so taken by the Dominican idea when he was in Rome in 1220, that St. Dominic, at his request, sent two friars of Scandinavian origin back home to Sweden with him. The archbishop of the time, however, did not share Gaufred's enthusiasm and put a sudden stop to the project.<sup>15</sup> In Dublin the Dominicans even obtained a site for their priory in 1224 as a gift from a convent of canons regular, who belonged to a different monastic order.<sup>16</sup>

Whereas the extent to which Friars Preachers of the local convents worked as theological teachers for the neighboring canons secular is an open question, there is no doubt that most North European canons were exposed to Dominican teaching at some point in their career. Dominican doctors soon achieved prominence in the theological faculties of Paris and Oxford, and later had influential roles at the newer universities of Cologne, Prague, Leipzig, and Greifswald. The universities of Glasgow, St. Andrews, and Rostock were dominated by the local Dominican priories.<sup>17</sup> Even the late university foundation in Uppsala (1477) is known to have had a Dominican lecturer.<sup>18</sup> A study of the educational background of canons secular at the leading Danish cathedral chapter in late medieval Lund has shown that three quarters of the

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<sup>13</sup> Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle* (see note 2), 160, 163.

<sup>14</sup> Walter Simons, "Bedelordenkloosters in het Graafschap Vlaanderen: Chronologie en topografie van de bedelordenverspreiding voor 1350," *Sacris erudiri* 30 (1987–88): 5–203; here 68–70.

<sup>15</sup> *Historia Ordinis Predicatorum in Dacia* (see note 3).

<sup>16</sup> Daphne D. C. P. Mould, *The Irish Dominicans: The Friars Preachers in the History of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1957), 31–32.

<sup>17</sup> O'Sullivan, *Medieval Irish Dominican Studies* (see note 2), 204; Foggie, *Renaissance religion* (see note 2), 9; Ingo Ulpts, *Die Bettelorden in Mecklenburg: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Franziskaner, Klarissen, Dominikaner und Augustiner-Eremiten im Mittelalter*. Saxonia franciscana, 6 (Werl: Dietrich-Coelde-Verlag, 1995), 252–59.

<sup>18</sup> Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1975), 134.

canons had studied abroad at universities known for their Dominican-influenced lectures in theology.<sup>19</sup>

Canons secular also benefitted from Dominican teaching and wisdom through writing. Dominican books were fundamentally intended for the Order's own brethren, but eventually they became at least as widespread and influential among the secular clergy. Cathedral chapters all over Northern Europe, especially in the fourteenth century, were in possession of numerous Dominican text books on theology, not least on the matters of preaching and hearing confession. Examples of such works are the sermon collections of Guy of Évreux (*Summa Guiotina*) and Jacques of Lausanne (*De tempore et de sanctis*), the confessor's manual *Summa de casibus poenitentiae* by Raymond of Peñafort (ca. 1175–1275), and Hugo Ripelin's (ca. 1205–ca. 1270) *Compendium theologiae veritas* for the teaching of young clergy; all of them extremely widespread among secular clergy all over late medieval Europe. Also Guillaume Peyraut's (d. 1271) *Summam de vitiis et virtutibus*, Thomas Aquinas' (1225–1274) *Summa theologiae* and Jacobus de Voragine's (ca. 1230–ca. 1298) *Legenda aurea* appear to have been standard Dominican literature known to practically all higher-educated clergy of the late Middle Ages. This literary form of Dominican authority on various theological matters seems to have been a very popular gift item as well as an item of trade. In thirteenth-century Paris, a devoted Beguine bought herself a copy of Peyraut's *Summam*, with which she travelled to secular priests for them to transcribe.<sup>20</sup>

More commonly, the books seem to have been donated or sold by the Friars Preachers themselves. In a will of 1350, Bishop Jakob Poulsen of Roskilde stated that he had a sermon collection by Jacques of Lausanne, which had been given to him by a Fr. Mathias, most likely a local Dominican from the convent in Roskilde, with which the bishop was closely connected.<sup>21</sup> In some cases people from outside the Order even wanted the Dominicans to handle the publication of their works in order to give it greater credibility and authority. When the Franciscan philosopher Roger Bacon (1214–1294) defied his own order in the 1260s and presented his *Opus maius* to his friend the pope, he explicitly expressed a wish that its publication through copying should be ad-

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<sup>19</sup> Per Ingesman, *Den lundensiske kapitelsgejstlighed i senmiddelalderen* (Århus: Århus Universitet, 1985), 247–49.

<sup>20</sup> David L. d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle* (see note 2), 54.

ministered by the Dominicans only, and in this way kept under competent control.<sup>22</sup>

North European Friars Preachers did not simply work as transmission links for authoritative Dominican literature by the Order's great masters in Western and Southern Europe. They were also very productive themselves in their own national markets. For instance, sermon collections of the early fourteenth century by the Danish Dominican Mathias Ripensis and his Polish colleague Peregrinus de Opole are preserved; none of them appear to differ from the standard Dominican sermons of their time, nevertheless did the latter enjoy great popularity in Poland throughout the rest of the Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup> The most widespread handbook on pastoral work in the parishes of late medieval Poland was written by the Dominican bishop Jan Biskupiec (1376–1452) in the 1430s.<sup>24</sup> In early fourteenth-century Bohemia, a Dominican Fr. Domaslaus wrote several of the sentences for a new episcopal *missale* for the diocese of Prague, and an anonymous Friar Preacher helped implement Christianity to all Bohemians by translating two major ecclesiastical works, *Meditationes vitae Christi* and *Legenda aurea*, into Czech.<sup>25</sup> The Danish Nicholas of Ribe (Nicolaus de Ripis) in 1473 made a compilation of 17 transcribed works on theological dogmatics and philosophy, which is known to have been used among Danish Cistercians and perhaps Augustinian canons regular too. The Norwegian Fr. Hjalme "in his own hand" wrote a small *missale* and a *breviarium portatile*, which King Haakon V (1270–1319) in 1319 donated to the cathedral of Oslo. The *missale* was to be used for the common good of all priests at the chapter, when travelling and giving mass outside the cathedral.<sup>26</sup> And in Finland, Dominican *missales* and *manuales* were copied *en masse* at the convent in Turku from the early fifteenth century for the use of the cathedral chapter and in all the parishes. Right from its origins the official liturgy of the diocese of Turku seems to have been strongly influenced by

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<sup>22</sup> Daniel Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning*. Middle Age Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 166.

<sup>23</sup> Denmark: Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle* (see note 2), 54–55. Poland: Kloczowski, "Dominicans of the Polish Province" (see note 5), 88.

<sup>24</sup> Jerzy Kloczowski, *A History of Polish Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 65.

<sup>25</sup> Franz Machilek, "Reformorden und Ordensreformen in den böhmischen Ländern vom 10. bis 18. Jahrhundert," *Bohemia Sacra: Das Christentum in Böhmen 973–1973*, ed. Ferdinand Seibt (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1974), 63–80; here 69, 71.

<sup>26</sup> *Danske Magazin*, 1. ser., vol. I (Copenhagen: Det kongelige danske Selskab for Fædrelandets Historie, 1745): 329–31.

Dominican guidelines, even if they were not adopted completely as they were by the Teutonic Order on the other side of the Baltic Sea.<sup>27</sup> One Dominican scripture from the North even became a standard theological text book throughout Europe, namely the *Rotulus pugillaris* by the Danish prior provincial Augustinus de Dacia (ca. 1260).

Not all canons secular were enthusiastic about the Dominican consultants and teachers called in by the bishops. The clearest example of this can be found in the Norwegian Hansa city of Bergen, where something must have gone terribly wrong right from the beginning. The Dominican priory was, just as in most other places, built next to the cathedral chapterhouse, but in this case they never developed a friendly relationship. Indeed, the very first record we have of the Friars Preachers in Bergen is from 1247, when a papal legate severely reprimanded the canons because they had constructed a line of toilets at the top of a slope leading down to the cemetery and church of their Dominican neighbors, obviously with the deliberate intention to harass the friars and keep the citizens of Bergen away from their church. Although papal legates, bishops and kings tried to settle the dispute, it seems to have continued for centuries. In spite of this, the friars stayed put until the Reformation, not least because they enjoyed great popularity with the numerous foreigners in Bergen, especially the Hansa merchants. Indeed, this may have been the initial reason for their problems with the canonry, as the foreigners often seem to have ignored the ecclesiastical authority of the canons and the secular church in Bergen in favor of the Dominicans, who spoke their languages and whose customs they were familiar with from their homelands.<sup>28</sup>

The main problem with the bishops and canons seems to have occurred when Friars Preachers did not pay sufficient respect to the ecclesiastical authority of the prelates. Even though the mendicant orders—at least under some popes—officially had papal authorization to practice their pastoral tasks without the acceptance of the bishops, the masters general and priors provincial of the Order strongly recommended that they always made sure to obtain such permission, more or less to humor the bishops, whose positive attitude was vital for the friars’ work in the dioceses. Serious problems arose when the friars had to choose between the bishops and conflicting and powerful third parties, such as kings and city councils. We have several

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27 Martti Parvio, “The Basic Sources of the Finnish Medieval Mass Tradition,” *Studia Theologica: Scandinavian Journal of Theology* 33 (1979): 33–147; Jesse Keskiäho, “Bortom fragmenten: Handskriftsproduktion och boklig kultur i det medeltida Åbo stift,” *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 93.3 (2008): 209–52; Brett, *Humbert of Romans* (see note 10), 97.

28 Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle* (see note 2), 153–54.

examples from all over Northern Europe of Dominican and Franciscan convents which had brought down upon themselves the wrath of their bishop because the friars, in support of princes or city councils, had ignored an interdict that the bishop had put on the city.<sup>29</sup> An extreme example of such a controversy occurred during a long dispute in early fourteenth-century Lübeck, where the powerful city council even left administration of the entire city's ecclesiastical establishment in the hands of the mendicants for a period of 18 years, after the bishop had placed the city under interdict and he and all his secular clergy had been kicked out of town by the magistrate!<sup>30</sup> In 1443, crossing the authority of the bishop of Bergen even put the local convent of Friars Preachers themselves under interdict, after they had dared to bury a condemned malefactor in their cemetery.<sup>31</sup>

The Friars Preachers were not just an indirect theological authority for the parish clergy through the teaching that went on at the cathedral schools. The direct contact between the friars and the parish priests was probably of even greater importance. Each individual priory had a convent school, where all the friars of the convent, from novices to the prior himself, were obliged to receive instruction in theology and rhetoric from the convent lector. Apparently, these schools were also, to some extent, open to people from outside the Order, especially the parish priests of the district, although there has been much dispute among modern scholars about whether this actually functioned in practice.<sup>32</sup> A convent school certainly seems to have been open at the

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<sup>29</sup> E.g. Reims/Douai: Simons, *Stad en apostolaat* (see note 6), 153. Schwerin/Rostock: Ulpts, *Die Bettelorden* (see note 17), 250–51. Denmark: Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrøle* (see note 2), 151.

<sup>30</sup> Ingo Ulpts, "Zur Rolle der Mendikanten in städtischen Konflikten des Mittelalters: Ausgewählte Beispiele aus Bremen, Hamburg und Lübeck," *Bettelorden und Stadt: Bettelorden und städtisches Leben im Mittelalter und in der Neuzeit*, ed. Dieter Berg, Saxonia Franciscana, 1 (Werl: Dietrich-Coelde-Verlag, 1992), 131–51; here 141–45.

<sup>31</sup> *Annales ecclesiae Danicæ* II, ed. Erich Pontoppidan (Copenhagen: Christoph Georg Glasing, 1741–1747), 591.

<sup>32</sup> Contra: Friedrich Wilhelm Oediger, *Über die Bildung der Geistlichen im späten Mittelalter*. Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 2 (Leiden and Cologne: Brill, 1953), 62–63; Pro: John R. H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945), 108; Frank, *Hausstudium und Universitätsstudium* (see note 10), 53–54; Kłoczowski, "Dominicans of the Polish Province" (see note 5), 85; Kaspar Elm, "Mendikantenstudium, Laienbildung und Klerikerschulen im spätmittelalterlichen Westfalen," *Studien zum städtischen Bildungswesen im Spätmittelalter und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. B. Moeller et al. Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse, 3. Folge, 137 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 586–617; here 603, 617; Dieter

Dominican priory in Tallinn, as the dismay of the cathedral chapter is documented. In 1319, the Danish king prohibited the inhabitants from using any other schools but the cathedral school, a ban, it seems, aimed particularly at the city's Dominican convent school. In 1424–1428, the bishop of Tallinn had to repeat the prohibition on open classes at the Dominican priory.<sup>33</sup> Although closely linked with financial considerations (school money), this dispute was first and foremost about the authority to teach. In late fifteenth-century Flanders, a similar complaint was lodged by the canons of Sint-Donaas in Bruges against the local Friars Preachers, who had initiated an open *studium generale* near the cathedral school in 1484, allegedly causing unjust competition.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, in the mid-thirteenth century secular professors at the University of Paris complained that ever since mendicant studies had begun in every city across the country, the number of theology students at university had declined disturbingly. To this, Thomas Aquinas replied that it was only because of inadequate teaching at the cathedral schools that the mendicant orders had had to open their schools for outsiders in the first place.<sup>35</sup> A general restriction on external admission to Dominican schools seems to have been that outsiders only were admitted to the theology classes, with lessons on biblical exegesis and basic rules in scholastic theology, whereas the convents' more secular-oriented classes, such as those in philosophy and canon law, were restricted to the brethren only—despite the fact that these topics were often the most popular among the secular clergy.<sup>36</sup>

However much secular-ecclesiastical learning went on in Dominican schools, I suggest that Dominican teaching of the parish clergy in the local parish churches and vicarages in the rural areas was still more important. These were visited once or twice a year by travelling friars—the so-called *fratres terminarii*—to give sermons to the parishioners and to collect alms for the convent. This gave the friars an excellent opportunity to practice on-site training and consultancy for the secular priests, with whom they were most likely accommodated, before moving on to the next parish. Even if popes and

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Berg, *Armut und Geschichte: Studien zur Geschichte der Bettelorden im hohen und späten Mittelalter*. Saxonia Franciscana, 11 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 2001), 121.

<sup>33</sup> *Diplomatarium Danicum*, 2. ser., vol. VIII (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1953), no. 83; Gustavs Strenga, *Devotion, Donation and Memoria. Urban Society and the Dominicans in Late Medieval Reval (Tallinn)* (Budapest: Central European University, 2006), 12–13.

<sup>34</sup> Jordanus Piet De Pue, *Geschiedenis van het oud Dominikanenklooster te Brugge (1233–1796)* (Leuven: Paters Dominicanen, 1981), 35.

<sup>35</sup> Frank, *Hausstudium und Universitätsstudium* (see note 10), 55–56.

<sup>36</sup> Frank, *Hausstudium und Universitätsstudium* (see note 10), 56; Berg, *Armut und Geschichte* (see note 32), 121–23.



bishops of the high and late Middle Ages regularly emphasized its importance, the preaching of God's Word to the laity seems never to have become a central part of the pastoral duties of the parish priests. Besides a shortage in both quantity and quality of secular preachers, it appears that most secular priests concentrated their efforts on celebrating Mass and the Divine Office and administering the sacraments.<sup>37</sup> Many bishops therefore endorsed access to the parish pulpits for mendicant friars. In 1277 the bishop of Cambrai encouraged the diocese priests to allow Dominican preachers into their churches to give sermons "on various important issues in the Gospels and to teach people about Faith."<sup>38</sup> Although examples of secular clergy taking a negative attitude to mendicant preaching in their parishes may be found from all over Europe,<sup>39</sup> complaints zealously supported by Jean Gerson (1363–1429) at the University of Paris,<sup>40</sup> for the average parish vicar it seems as if such recurrent visits by mendicant friars were only too welcome. The intellectual stimuli in the rural parishes of medieval Northern Europe for a semi-learned man probably left something to be desired, and the visiting friars must have offered a pleasant break in the everyday life of the priest, not to mention an opportunity for the priest to draw upon the Church's main authority on theology.

## Dominicans as Preachers and Confessors

The main means for the Friars Preachers to exercise their theological authority and pass on their orthodox knowledge to their fellow Christians in lay society was through preaching. The dominant topics of known Dominican sermons of the Middle Ages are the importance of confession and repentance for one's sins, to reach reconciliation with one's enemies, and to be generous to the

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<sup>37</sup> Moorman, *Church Life* (see note 32), 77–78; Anne Riising, *Danmarks middelalderlige prædiken* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1969), 32–35; Freed, *The Friars* (see note 2), 48; d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars* (see note 20), 14–15; Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ: Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 21; Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle* (see note 2), 40–44.

<sup>38</sup> Simons, *Stad en apostolaat* (see note 6), 193–94.

<sup>39</sup> England: d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars* (see note 20), 40; Germany: Riising, *Danmarks middelalderlige prædiken* (see note 37), 34–35; Freed, *The Friars* (see note 2), 89.

<sup>40</sup> Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 211; Nancy McLoughlin, "Gerson as a Preacher in the Conflict between Mendicants and Secular Priests," *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire. Brill's *Companions to the Christian Tradition*, 3 (Leiden and Brill, 2006), 249–91; here 280.



poor. Furthermore, Dominican sermons can generally be described as "Christo-centric" and as promoting "Christo-morphism," as they were very often based on the life and behavior of Jesus Christ, recommending mankind to live as close to this ideal as possible. This recommendation did not least go for the Friars Preachers themselves, whom just by rendering the words and will of God in one sense performed an Imitation of Christ.<sup>41</sup>

A typical Dominican sermon directed to the mass of ordinary lay people might be based, for instance, on a part of the Gospels. After reading the actual text, each important factor would be pointed out and explained separately, often by using the *distinctiones*, extracting four different meanings of the most important elements in the text: a literal, an allegorical, a moral and an anagogical meaning. This was a method developed by Thomas Aquinas and elaborated by one of his North European disciples, the Danish Dominican Augustinus de Dacia (d. 1285). The moral of the text was illustrated by the use of contemporary examples and metaphors. The use of *exempla* was something Dominican preachers became renowned for excelling in, just as they frequently used comparison of difficult theological issues with everyday phenomena. Guillaume Peyraut compared Lent with a seasonal market, where one could obtain a good product (a shorter way to salvation) from the merchants (the confessional fathers) for a low cost (confession of one's sins).<sup>42</sup> Or, even more dramatically, the mendicant preacher of Flanders who compared the value of indulgence to the Flemish tradition of pole-vaulting over watercourses: in a similar way, he claimed, indulgence made it possible to "pole-vault" one's way through purgatory.<sup>43</sup>

One of the issues that Dominican friars often preached on was the need to give confession and do penance. Indeed, medieval sermons were closely integrated with confession and were supposed to lead to it. As the Dominican Peter of Reims (Petrus Remensis) put it: "Preaching is to sow, hearing confession is to harvest."<sup>44</sup> It was from the sermon that the listener became aware of his or her sins and regretted them, thus recognizing the need to confess them, do penance and obtain absolution. This in turn made the

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<sup>41</sup> Simons, *Stad en apostolaat* (see note 6), 198–201; Clifford Hugh Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (London and New York: Longman, 1994), 121. See note above.

<sup>42</sup> d'Array, *The Preaching of the Friars* (see note 20), 208–10.

<sup>43</sup> Christoph T. Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series, 28 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 118.

<sup>44</sup> Pierre de Reims, cf. d'Array, *The Preaching of the Friars* (see note 20), 50.

sermon an initial part of the sacramental line between confession, penance and absolution as necessary preparation for celebrating Holy Communion.

The Friars Preachers did not restrict themselves to preaching about confession, as at an early stage they also began to hear confessions, impose penances and give absolution. Whereas performing the pastoral task of preaching generally seems to have caused little or no objection by the secular clergy, the mendicant intrusion on the sacrament of penance caused much more disturbance, particularly with the parish clergy. This occurred partly because administering of the sacraments was considered an important part of the parish priest's pastoral duties and partly due to the economical interests connected to penance and derived offerings. Furthermore, it was often claimed by the opponents of the mendicants that the friars were far too lenient with their penances, the consequence of this being that many sinners preferred to confess to the friars rather than to their own parish priest. Since there are virtually no records of penances it is difficult to know how much variation there was in their harshness, but secondary sources do indicate that Friars Preachers followed a relatively mild and pragmatic line when imposing penance. According to Humbert of Romans (1200–1277), this was done not out of competitive speculation, but out of pious consideration that it is better to send people into purgatory by letting them off with too mild a penance than to send them straight to hell by imposing a penance they cannot fulfill.<sup>45</sup>

Another consideration put forward by the Dominicans was that for many people it felt embarrassing to confess all their sins to the local priest, and many secular priests did not know how to distinguish properly between different kinds of sins—which, apparently, the Friars Preachers did. Indeed, the most widespread textbook on penance in medieval Northern Europe was *Summa de casibus poenitentiae* by the Dominican Raymond of Peñafort, commonly found in cathedral libraries, indicating that the Friars Preachers were considered expert authorities on this issue as well as others.<sup>46</sup> Dominican authority on confession and penance was recognized early on by the highest lay circles in society. Kings and princes all over Europe chose Dominican friars as their personal confessors and, especially in the thirteenth century, friars also became very influential at the courts as royal advisors and

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<sup>45</sup> Humbert of Romans, *De eruditione praedicatorum* (c. 1267–77), ed. J. J. Berthier in *Humberti de Romanis: Opera de Vita Regulari* vol. 2 (Rome, 1888–1889; Torino: Marietti, 1956), 373–484; here 361–63, 366.

<sup>46</sup> d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars* (see note 20), 51; Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ* (see note 37), 45; Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact* (see note 41), 123–24; Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle* (see note 2), 68.

diplomats.<sup>47</sup> Eventually, this practice was imitated by the nobility and higher bourgeoisie, to whom making confessions to esteemed professionals was preferable to making them to simple parish priests. This was seemingly the case for many wealthy women. In defense of mendicant confessors, one thirteenth-century friar not only pointed to the lack of penitential skills among parish priests, but also noted that many of them were "known as notorious fornicators, which is why honest women are afraid to confess to them."<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps it is worth stressing that Dominican and Franciscan fathers were licensed by the pope to take confessions, but after 1300 both papal authorization and common practice was so restricted that the mendicant confessors had to be presented beforehand to the local bishop. That the secular-mendicant relation on this matter was usually rather good and pragmatic is indicated by three church-synodal statutes from Sweden of the period 1350–1440, from which we learn that some Swedish parish priests at least voluntarily left all confession hearing in their parishes to mendicant friars, which led the bishops to stress that such sacramental outsourcing needed episcopal permission.<sup>49</sup>

## Dominicans as Papal Commissioners and Inquisitors

Occasionally Friars Preachers also worked as theological authorities in Northern Europe with a special papal license. Individual friars were regularly appointed to take part in various commissions, where they were to investigate and report back to the Vatican, or make decisions on behalf of the pope, for instance when

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<sup>47</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact* (see note 41), 166–80; Ireland: O'Sullivan, *Medieval Irish Dominican Studies* (see note 2), passim; Scotland: Foggie, *Renaissance Religion* (see note 2), 14; England: Jarrett, *The English Dominicans* (see note 2), 5–8; Burgundy: Adrian Gerard Jongkees, *Staat en Kerk in Holland en Zeeland onder de Bourgondische hertogen 1425–1477*. Bijdragen van het Instituut voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis der Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht, 21 (Groningen: Wolters, 1942), 52–54; North Germany: Axel Vorberg, "Beiträge zur Geschichte Dominikanerordens in Mecklenburg II: Das Dominikanerkloster zu Röbel," *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland IX* (1913): 1–20; here 2; Bohemia: Machilek, "Reformorden und Ordensreformen" (see note 25), 69; Poland: Kłoczowski, "Dominicans of the Polish Province" (see note 5), 81; Denmark: Jakobsen, *Prædikebrødrenes samfundsrolle* (see note 2), 69–70; Scandinavia: Gallén, *La Province de Dacie* (see note 2), passim.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact* (see note 41), 165.

<sup>49</sup> *Synodalstatuter och andre kyrkorättsliga aktstycken från den svenska medeltidskyrkan*, ed. Jaakko Gummerus. Publications of the Swedish Society of Church History, Skrifter II: 2 (Uppsala: Kyrkohistoriska föreningen, 1901–1902), nos. 27, 45, 91.

making inquiries into claims that recently deceased persons should be canonized. A number of Dominican friars also worked as papal penitentiaries at the Curia, where they as the pope's assistants judged in all major church-juridical cases and confessional matters that were considered above the jurisdiction of the bishops. As such "minor penitentiaries" the learned friars also acted as "papal ambassadors" for their respective nations, representing the Crown, Church and common people of their country (or countries) at the Curia, and at the same time working as authoritative advisors to their fellow countrymen on how best to approach the pope. Furthermore, in the fourteenth century, Friars Preachers had a near-monopoly on preaching the crusades in Northern Europe, whether it was against the Stedingers of the Lower Weser, the pagans of the south-east Baltic shores or the Muslims in the Holy Land. The friars knew the correct theological arguments to put against these enemies of Christianity, and they had the oral skills to get the message through to their audience. For this reason, around 1230 the Teutonic Grandmaster Hermann von Salza (ca. 1165–1239) explicitly asked the pope to let only Dominicans preach "his" crusade against the Prussians and Livonians, because he trusted them most.<sup>50</sup>

A final—and probably the most infamous—example of Dominican authority within medieval theology is as papal inquisitors. For many people, the Dominicans of the Middle Ages are personified in the shape of Bernard Gui (1261/62–1331), as he is portrayed in Umberto Eco's novel *Name of the Rose*. The Papal Inquisition was a papal court instituted by Pope Gregory IX (r. 1227–1241) in 1231 to investigate and punish heresy, and thereby avoid new religious tragedies such as the recently terminated Albigensian crusade. From an early point the popes seem to have preferred mendicant friars to lead the inquisition because some bishops had proved unreliable, both in terms of being more influenced by local-political interests and in terms of inquisitorial qualifications. To identify true heresy, the inquisitor himself had to be very strong in orthodox theology, and furthermore develop a systematic method distinguishing heretical thought from simple Christian confusion. Dominican friars were better qualified than any others for the job of papal inquisitor.

The Papal Inquisition became an important institution, especially in Southern and Central Europe, but from its earliest days inquisitors also reached the northern shores of the Continent. In fact, in the year of its initiation, 1231, Pope Gregory set up an inquisitorial committee in north-western Germany consisting of the bishop of Lübeck and two prominent Dominican friars, who were to investigate accusations put forward by the

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50 Maier, *Preaching the Crusades* (see note 43), 43–48, 51.

archbishop of Bremen against the rebellious farmers living in the marshlands of the Lower Weser ("die Stedinger").<sup>51</sup> As the institution became more established, permanent inquisitors were appointed by the pope to cover a certain district, in which the inquisitor and his assistants travelled as an itinerant court to visit the various locations at regular intervals. The severity of the inquisition varied significantly according to the extent of heresy in the local community and the personality of the individual inquisitor. Among the more notorious inquisitors in Germany, Fr. Johann Schadeland apparently made himself so unpopular that the pope in 1355 granted him a letter of protection, and his successors, such as the well-known Fr. Walter Kerlinger (d. 1373), organized a series of prosecutions and burnings of Beggards and Beguines in the Hansa cities of Rostock, Stralsund and Lübeck in the following decades.<sup>52</sup>

Heresy could even occur within the established church itself. In the Prussian Hansa town of Elbląg (Elbing), the parish church had a famous painting of the pope with cardinals and bishops on one side and the emperor with kings, princes and noblemen on the other, and the name of Christ written above them in gold letters. The painting was revered like images of saints with lay prayers and offerings, but to the Dominican friar Petrus Wichmann this was pure heresy. Having set himself and his convent in opposition to the entire city, lay and clergy, the Order understandably decided to transfer him to Toruń, only to find that here they apparently had a similar picture, which led him to accuse the parish priest and several members of the Teutonic Order of heresy in 1430. In return, the Teutonic Knights expelled the friar from town.<sup>53</sup>

In Poland, Pope John XXII (r. 1316–1334) instituted a permanent office of papal inquisitor in 1318, which lasted until 1552. Its origin lay in the province of Silesia, which came under the Bohemian crown after 1335 but was part of the Polish church province of Gniezno. Silesia had a significant German population, and many German Waldensians had travelled east in search of a more liberal environment. In 1315 the Silesian bishop of Wrocław asked two leading Dominican friars of the convent in Świdnica to assist him in interrogating and prosecuting the numerous newly-arrived Waldensians in the home town of the convent, an inquisition which allegedly led to dozens of death sentences and burnings of heretics. After this proof of their inquisitorial

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<sup>51</sup> Freed, *The Friars* (see note 2), 146–47.

<sup>52</sup> Rudolf Kleiminger, *Das Schwarze Kloster in Seestadt Wismar: Ein Beitrag zur Kultur- und Baugeschichte der norddeutschen Dominikanerklöster im Mittelalter* (Munich: Neuer Filser-Verlag, 1938), 46; Ulpts, *Die Bettelorden* (see note 17), 252.

<sup>53</sup> Edward Carstenn, *Geschichte der Hansestadt Elbing* (Elbing: Verlag von L. Sauniers Buchhandlung, 1937), 215–16.

efficiency, the popes gave the Dominicans of Polonia charge of the Papal Inquisition in Poland and Silesia. From 1327 the popes even left it to the priors provincial of Polonia themselves to appoint new inquisitors from the ranks of the Order. These were kept busy by heretical movements such as the Waldensians, Beggards and Hussites for the rest of the Middle Ages.<sup>54</sup>

In the Netherlands and Flanders, the Dominican Friars Preachers also played an important part in the local inquisition. In the diocese of Utrecht, a series of leading Dominican friars were appointed inquisitors from 1484 to 1538. For instance, it was a Dominican, Father Lawrence, who preached as a vehement opponent of the humanist ideas of Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536).<sup>55</sup> Sometimes people accused of heresy by inquisitorial Dominicans even dared to turn the sword against the friars themselves. This was indeed what happened to Fr. Matthew Grabow in the early fifteenth century, after he had verbally attacked a lay brotherhood within the *Devotio moderna* called the “Brethren of the Common Life.” The brotherhood had, however, the support of the bishop in Utrecht, who had recognized them in 1401, so with this episcopal authorization the Brethren of the Common Life decided to turn the tables on Fr. Grabow and accuse him of heresy. In the end, it was the brotherhood who won the day, as theological experts summoned at the Council of Constance ruled against the Dominican friar, who was convicted of heresy and threatened with the stake if he did not withdraw his groundless accusations.<sup>56</sup>

A papal or Dominican Inquisition never operated as such in medieval England or Scandinavia. Nevertheless, English Dominicans were usually involved when local authorities established inquisitional tribunals to deal with matters of heresy, such as the heretical misunderstandings of John Wyclif (d. 1384) in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. When the English bishops began to trial his followers, the Lollards, Dominican friars played an active part in collecting evidence against them, asking questions before the episcopal court and helping interpreting the answers. Actual heretical movements never reached Scandinavian latitudes—at least, not until the

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54 Pawel Kras, “Dominican Inquisitors in Medieval Poland (14th–15th c.),” *Praedicatores, inquisitores I: The Dominicans and the Medieval Inquisition. Acts of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Seminar on the Dominicans and the Inquisition, Rome 23–25 February 2002* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum, 2004), 249–309; here 252–86.

55 Jordanus Piet De Pue, *Geschiedenis van het oud Dominikanenklooster te Ieper (1263–1797)* (Leuven: Paters Dominicanen), 28–29; Menno Brada, *Dominicanen in Winsum* (Leusden: Ansfried, 1982), 39; Brada, *Dominicanen in Utrecht: “na de preek van 1579”* (see note 8), 44–45.

56 As discussed in an unpublished paper “Reciprocal Accusations of Heresy: Matthew Grabow OP and the Brethren of the Common Life,” presented by Hildo van Engen, International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 13 July 2009.

arrival of Lutheranism in the 1520s. Until then, only individuals were investigated for heresy in Scandinavia. The classic case of this in medieval Scandinavia concerns a Swedish farmer, Botolf of Gottröra, who lived in Östby in the archdiocese of Uppsala in the early fourteenth century. Allegedly, he had denied the presence of Christ during Holy Communion. In 1310–1311, Archbishop Nils Kettilsson of Uppsala (d. 1314) set up an inquisitorial commission under the presidency of an Uppsala canon and the esteemed Dominican prior of the nearby convent in Sigtuna, Fr. Israel Erlandsson (d. 1332). The two inquisitors called in 13 parishioners from Östby and the local parish priest to question them about the incident, and afterwards, the record ambiguously states, Botolf was handed over to secular power for sentence and punishment, which means that he was probably burned at the stake.<sup>57</sup>

From an ecclesiastical point of view, it was very likely a far more serious matter when a parish priest, Father Heyno at the St. Olav Church in Visby on Gotland, in 1393 was accused by the local Friars Preachers of expressing heretic thoughts. He was alleged to have claimed that it was a mortal sin to attend Mass celebrated by a priest who himself lived in mortal sin, and that such a priest could not give absolution. For the Dominicans, it did not make it any better that Father Heyno had also disputed the mendicant friars' right to give absolution, both in writing and in speech: according to him the friars had sidetracked the path to salvation, because “the men of the orders were seducers of the people” and altogether unsuited for this important task. Father Heyno was thus undermining the sacred authority of both the secular priesthood and the mendicant orders. After the Dominican friars of Visby had reported this to the secular-ecclesiastical authorities, the parish priest was suspended from office and brought before an episcopal court led by the bishop of Linköping, of which the final outcome is unknown.<sup>58</sup>

Regarding the authority of Dominican inquisitors it is worth noting that all studies from Northern Europe seem to give the same picture as described in the case of Uppsala, namely that high-ranking Dominican theologians were brought in to question suspected heretics as experts on orthodox theology. In other words, it was their task to determine whether the accused was truly and intentionally a heretic or just a confused fool, while the actual judging was left for the bishops. The all-powerful inquisitor—investigator, prosecutor, judge, jury and

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<sup>57</sup> *Diplomatarium Suecanum* III, ed. Bror Emil Hildebrand (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt, 1842, 1850), III, no. 1789; Jarl Gallén, “Kättare,” *Kulturhistorisk leksikon för nordisk middelalder: Fra vikingetid til reformationstid*, vol. 10 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1965): 69–74; here 72.  
<sup>58</sup> Gallén, “Kättare” (see note 57), 72–73; Sven-Erik Pernler, *Gotlands medeltida kyrkoliv* (Visby: Barry Press Förlag, 1977), 201–03.



executioner—such as Umberto Eco's Bernard Gui, is very hard to find in medieval sources. Without the canonical support of the bishop, the Dominican inquisitor was quite powerless, as shown in the cases of Fr. Wichmann in Prussia and Fr. Grabow in Utrecht.

## Conclusion: Remarks on Dominican Authority

The authority of Dominican inquisitors can be considered as representative of medieval Dominican authority in general. St. Dominic initially formed his Order to counter heresy, with friars especially trained in orthodox theology and communication. Pope Gregory IX and his successors acknowledged Dominican qualifications in this field and officially granted the Order inquisitorial authority on behalf of the Apostolic See. The bishops recognized the authority of the Order partly because of the apparent wisdom of the friars and partly because they had secured papal approval, but this episcopal recognition was not forced upon them by apostolic enjoinder: bishops were equally likely to appoint Dominican investigators on their own initiative for their own inquisitions. Finally, the authority of the Dominican inquisitors was recognized and generally complied with by lay authorities and society; local lords and magistrates protected and facilitated the inquisitors, and people in general—the most unrepentant heretics excluded—recognized the inquisitorial friars' supreme knowledge on these matters.

The abovementioned four criteria had to be fulfilled for Dominican authority in general to function. The Order of Preachers had achieved such authority by specializing in studying, interpreting, communicating and discussing theology to the extent that the friars could claim that they, better than any contemporaries, were capable of understanding the Word and will of God. Right from the formation of the Order, their capacity as expert theologians was acknowledged by the popes, who made frequent use of the Friars Preachers themselves, as well as promoting and encouraging respect and recognition of their authority throughout Latin Europe within the Holy Church, among lay and clergy alike.

There appear to be two basic reasons for this solid apostolic backing. First of all, the popes seem to have genuinely acknowledged the theological insight of the Dominican Order and the friars' ability to communicate orthodox learning effectively to other people, both for friars within the order's highest ranks and among its rank-and-file preachers. Second, the Order of Preachers constituted a hitherto unknown means for enacting papal policy directly all over Latin Europe, circumventing the episcopal intermediary. For this reason very few popes did anything to undermine the authority of the Dominicans. The



"classic case" of anti-mendicant papal behavior presented in scholarly literature is the bull *Super cathedram* issued by Boniface VIII (ca. 1235–1303) in 1300, in which friars of both the Franciscan and the Dominican Order were restrained on a number of issues concerning their pastoral privileges—mainly in regard to preaching, hearing confession and conducting lay funerals at the priories. In fact the bull seems to have done no more than legalize what was already common practice, enjoined on the convents by pragmatic parties in the orders' own leadership to avoid angering the bishops.<sup>59</sup>

The major apostolic threat to both mendicant orders came in 1254, when their opponents won Pope Innocent IV (r. 1243–1254) over to what could have been a final dissolution of the orders, but fortunately for the friars the pope died a few weeks after introducing the first severe legislation against them. Even more fortuitously, he was replaced by a Franciscan friar, who, to little surprise, turned the tide in mendicant favor; on this issue, Franciscans and Dominicans were close allies.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, the Order of Preachers was almost always loyal to the popes. Even the papal schism did not really change this, since the Dominican Order—just like the rest of the Roman-Catholic world—was divided in two groups, each supporting its own pope. The Dominicans in France, Spain and Scotland supported the Avignon pope, all other Dominican provinces supported the pope in Rome, which kept the Order aligned with the rest of the Church in their respective countries.

The main conflict between papacy and the Dominican Order actually took place on the eve of the Lutheran Reformation. In 1513, the Dominican inquisitor Jacob van Hochstraten (ca. 1460–1527) launched a campaign against the Humanist leader Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), who was, however, eagerly defended by Pope Leo X (r. 1513–1521), a Humanist himself. The pope's humiliating measures against his own inquisitor turned the whole Order of Preachers against the apostolic see, threatening to start a new schism. This dispute about supreme authority on orthodoxy and heresy was not settled until 1520, when Pope Leo had to give in because he needed Dominican assistance against Martin Luther (1483–1546). Van Hochstraten was reinstalled as inquisitor and Reuchlin ordered to keep silence. One could see this as a victory for the Friars Preachers, but the Dominican inquisitors'

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<sup>59</sup> Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact* (see note 41), 158–61.

<sup>60</sup> *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, ed. Simon Tugwell (London: SPCK, 1982), 33; Brett, *Humbert of Romans* (see note 10), 19.

“strike” of 1517–1520 may have allowed Luther to gain enough strength to be unstoppable by the time the inquisitors started working again.<sup>61</sup>

Consistent papal backing was an important precondition for the external recognition of Dominican authority, but that alone was never enough. Local acknowledgement was needed as well. Within the secular Church, the Friars Preachers were especially dependent on the support of the local bishop. Without it, although it may not have been impossible for the friars to use their authority provided that they could depend on extensive support from either canons, lay lords or city magistrates, it certainly made Dominican life difficult. For this reason most convents in ecclesiastical centers wisely made an effort to keep close and good relations with both bishops and canons secular (from whose ranks the next bishop was likely to come). Such a secular-ecclesiastical recognition of Dominican authority was essential for any authoritative action that the Order, as consultants and teachers on theology, directed against the secular clergy itself. In addition, it was necessary for the friars to find an audience in the lay public. In many cases, Dominican authority to preach and hear confessions among the laity had to be explicitly verified by the secular clergy, for instance with letters issued by the bishop or with the consent of an attending parish priest.

Dominican authority on theology was far from being universally accepted. Secular intellectuals of the universities in Paris and Oxford continuously questioned and challenged the Order’s authority. The Dominicans also had a serious conflict with their mendicant colleagues of the Franciscan Order about the question of *Maria Immaculata*, whether the Mother of Christ herself had also been conceived without any stain of original sin, an idea zealously rejected by the Dominicans, which lost the Order the support of the French crown. But as long as they managed to maintain good relations with the papal curia, the local episcopal see and the local lay authorities, which was achieved not least by recognizing, respecting and promulgating *their* authority in medieval society, the Dominican Friars Preachers seem to have been accepted by most as the leading capacity and authority on God’s will. It was the sacred and challenging task of the friars to explain His will to all other men—be they king or peasant, lay or clergy, man or woman—through preaching, writing and consultancy. Then it was left for people themselves, or to other authoritative third parties, to decide on how to act on it. The ultimate decision, of course, was left to God Himself.

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<sup>61</sup> Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887), 424–25.

Sean A. Otto

# Predestination and the Two Cities: The Authority of Augustine and the Nature of the Church in Giles of Rome and John Wyclif

## Introduction

Sed quia auctoritas cereum habet nasum, id est in diversum potest flecti sensum, rationibus roborandum est.<sup>1</sup>

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) is quite possibly the most influential theologian in the Christian West. His vast corpus of works helped to define many of the questions that would prove so important to Western thought.<sup>2</sup> In the Middle Ages, it is difficult to exaggerate the influence of Augustine: “Among the most common words in medieval theological writings must be the phrase: ‘Augustinus dicit,’ used as an introduction to a ‘proof from the Fathers’.” Augustine, a man who took a modest view of his own writings in comparison to the works of his predecessors, later became a universally cited authority in the West:<sup>3</sup> he was in fact so influential that “it could be argued that Augustine’s defining impact in the history of medieval Christian philosophy and theology makes this history itself, in some senses, ‘Augustinian.’”<sup>4</sup>

Giles of Rome (Ægidius Romanus, ca. 1247–1316) was an important papal apologist, one-time regent-master of arts at the University of Paris, Prior-General of the Augustinian Order (1291–1294), and Archbishop of Bourges

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1 “But since authority has a wax nose, that is, it can be bent in different directions, for that reason it ought to be reinforced,” Alan of Lille, *De fidei catholica contra haereticos*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series Latina (or *Patrologia Latina*, hereafter PL) (Paris: Garnier, 1844–1865), 210: 333A.

2 On the spread of Augustine’s influence, see James J. O’Donnell, “The Authority of Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 22 (1991): 7–35.

3 Robert B. Eno, “Doctrinal Authority in Saint Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 12 (1981): 133–72; here 133.

4 Stephen F. Brown and Juan Carlos Flores, “Augustinianism,” *Historical Dictionary of Medieval Philosophy and Theology* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 33.

from 1294 until his death.<sup>5</sup> He made his career under Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294–1303), and quite possibly had a hand in drafting the famous bull *Unam sanctam*, a document that was put to use by John Wyclif (ca. 1330–1384) for very different purposes.<sup>6</sup> Giles was also an avid follower of Augustine, both in his vocation as an Augustinian hermit and in his writings.

John Wyclif was one of the most controversial thinkers of the late Middle Ages. He was famed as one of the most important philosophers of his time, and was highly influential in church reform movements, both in England (through Lollardy)<sup>7</sup> and in Bohemia (through the Hussites).<sup>8</sup> His understanding of the Christian Church, and in particular of the papacy, was complex, and he explored ecclesiological themes in a number of works: *De ecclesia*, *De potestate pape*, and several polemical pieces. Wyclif's emphases sometimes changed, but the basis of his understanding the nature of the church remained Augustine. Augustine's importance for, and influence on, Wyclif (indeed on medieval thought in general) can hardly be exaggerated; there are times in these treatises when Wyclif follows an argument from one of Augustine's works through several pages of his own, or where the quotation is extensive enough to cover entire pages.<sup>9</sup> As Gordon Leff has noted, "John Wyclif's outlook can be regarded as one in a long series of reinterpretations of the Augustinian tradition. That it led to something very different from traditional Augustinianism should not blind us to his Augustinian inspiration. It informed every aspect of his thought—on being, the Bible, the Church, dominion, grace, predestination, even the Eucharist."<sup>10</sup>

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5 R. W. Dyson, "Introduction," *Giles of Rome's On Ecclesiastical Power: A Medieval Theory of World Government*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), xi.

6 Ibid., xx. On Wyclif's use of *Unam sanctam*, see pages 149–50 below, and John Wyclif, *De ecclesia*, ed. Johann Loserth (London: Wyclif Society, 1885; New York: Johnson Reprints, 1966), 7, 25–47. The text of *Unam sanctam* can be found, inter alia, in Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050–1300: With Selected Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press in association with the Medieval Academy of America, 1988): 188–89.

7 See the seminal work of Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

8 Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967).

9 See for example John Wyclif, *De potestate pape*, ed. Johann Loserth (London: Wyclif Society, 1907; New York: Johnson Reprints, 1966), 19–21, 324–25 (hereafter *DPP*). While this is not unusual for a medieval author, it is an indication of Wyclif's reliance on, and respect for, Augustine.

10 Gordon Leff, "Wyclif and the Augustinian Tradition with Special Reference to His *De Trinitate*," *Medievalia et Humanistica* N.S. 1 (1970): 29–39; here 29.

Giles is in many ways the antithesis of Wyclif. The two shared a common background in the medieval university and the study of the arts and theology, and even shared similar views on *dominium* (lordship), arguing that all *dominium* rests with God, who dispenses it to human beings who are in a state of grace. In point of fact, Wyclif's theory of *dominium* is founded in the Augustinian papalism of thinkers like Giles.<sup>11</sup> The crucial distinction between the two lies in the fact that Giles took the route of supporting the ecclesiastical hierarchy—indeed his career progressed by climbing the ranks of this hierarchy—whereas Wyclif took the route of supporting the secular lords as a longtime follower of John of Gaunt (1340–1399) and supporter of the Crown of England.<sup>12</sup> The secular and ecclesiastical powers had been involved in several struggles over jurisdiction throughout the Middle Ages, from conflicts over the right to invest bishops in their offices to struggles over taxation.<sup>13</sup> The two writers represent opposite sides of an argument over the role of the spiritual authority in secular governance. Giles's interpretation of Augustine offers a striking contrast to Wyclif's position, and will thus provide a very useful comparison as we look at how different the use of the same authority can be. My focus here will be on two things: how Giles uses one authority, Augustine, to prop up another, the papacy and how Wyclif turns one authority, Augustine, against another, the papacy.

I will begin by laying out briefly Augustine's conception of the Church, highlighting the ambiguities in this teaching, ambiguities that allowed for differing interpretations. I will then look at Giles's great work of papalist apologetics, the *De ecclesiastica potestate* and his use of the Bishop of Hippo in this work. Finally, I will look at Wyclif's use of Augustinian doctrines in his ecclesiology in contrast to Giles.

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**11** On Wyclif's relation to Giles' theory of *dominium*, see Stephen Lahey, *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., 54 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40–48.

**12** On Wyclif and John of Gaunt, see Anthony Goodman, *John of Gaunt: The Exercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth-Century England* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1992), 241–43.

**13** On the investiture controversy, see Ian S. Robinson, *The Papacy 1073–1198: Continuity and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). On the contest between Philip IV (the Fair) of France and Boniface VIII, see T. S. R. Boase, *Boniface VIII* (London: Constable, 1933), and Joseph Reese Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 237–99. On the English Crown and the papacy in Wyclif's day, see W. A. Pantin, "The Fourteenth Century," *The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. H. Lawrence (New York: Fordham University Press, 1965), 159–94.

## Augustine's Conception of the Church

As a thinker, and more importantly as a writer, Augustine was not systematic, however consistent he might or might not have been.<sup>14</sup> This means that unlike Wyclif, he never wrote a *De ecclesia* in which he set out a systematic exposition of his ecclesiology.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Augustine's teachings were developed through a series of controversies and amongst the many demands on a late Roman bishop, many of his writings emerging in opposition to those of various Manicheans, Pelagians, Arians, and Donatists, as a simple survey of the titles of his works reveals.<sup>16</sup> The most influential of Augustine's works, one on which much later ecclesiology was based, is the *De civitate Dei*, The City of God.<sup>17</sup> Two teachings were particularly important for medieval interpreters of Augustine: that concerning predestination and that concerning the two cities.

Augustine's teaching on predestination has caused many difficulties for his interpreters, as the question of each individual's responsibility for his or her moral behavior has yielded no consensus.<sup>18</sup> The Calvinist interpretation holds that Augustine taught strict dual predestination, where some are predestined from all eternity to salvation and others to damnation. Other interpretations say that Augustine taught that the human will is in bondage to sin, or argue about how the human will is or is not free.<sup>19</sup> What seems clear is that Augustine certainly taught that humans need God's grace at every turn in order to attain salvation, so that everyone needs the grace of perseverance and even the elect are likely to sin.<sup>20</sup> Because humanity is utterly unable to save itself, there is also no way of knowing in this life whether or not one is

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**14** Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), viii–ix.

**15** Despite Wyclif's various digressions in his work, his is certainly a more systematic exposition than Augustine's.

**16** Conveniently listed in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), xxxv–il.

**17** All references are to Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), hereafter *DCD*.

**18** On Augustine and predestination, see John M. Rist, "Augustine on Free Will and Predestination," *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1972), 218–52; Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 176–82; Jaroslav Pelikan, "An Augustinian Dilemma: Augustine's Doctrine of Grace versus Augustine's Doctrine of the Church?," *Augustinian Studies* 18 (1987): 1–29; Paul Rigby, "The Role of God's 'Inscrutable Judgments' in Augustine's Doctrine of Predestination," *Augustinian Studies* 33.2 (2002): 213–22.

**19** Rist, "Augustine on Free Will" (see note 18), 218.

**20** Rist, "Augustine on Free Will" (see note 18), 224–25.

saved, a point which will become important for Wyclif's conception of the Church, as we shall see. It appears that those predestined to salvation receive, and accept by necessity, a gift of grace from God, which is a positive action on God's part leading to salvation. However, those predestined to damnation are not condemned as a result of a direct, positive action of God. That is, they are damned by their own actions, actions which are foreknown and accepted by God, and the guilt of these actions remains with the sinner. Better put, all humans are tainted by sin and are therefore subject to damnation through God's just judgment, but some are given the gift of prevenient grace through God's mercy.<sup>21</sup> There is an ambiguity in Augustine's teaching, or at least the possibility of ambiguity, and this ambiguity led to rather different interpretations of Augustine during the Middle Ages, as theologians sought to understand so authoritative a figure as the sainted Bishop of Hippo.<sup>22</sup>

In the *City of God*, Augustine sets forth his schema of the two cities, which was to have such important implications for medieval thought. "The primary aim of the *City of God* is to describe the antithesis between the two cities ... the heavenly city as opposed to the earthly one, the *civitas Dei* as opposed to the *civitas diaboli*, the society of the believers as opposed to the society of the wicked."<sup>23</sup> These two cities are in constant struggle, the one constantly looking towards God, the other only to itself, with love at the centre of the question:

Two cities, then, have been created by two loves: that is, the earthly by love of self extending even to contempt of God, and the heavenly by love of God extending to the

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**21** Rist, "Augustine on Free Will" (see note 18), 226–28, cf. TeSelle, *Augustine* (see note 18), 178–81. See *DCD* (see note 17), 5.9–11, 198–206. The question of whether or not the human being is truly free to damn or save him/herself is another matter entirely, on which see Rist, "Augustine on Free Will" (see note 18), 235–41, and his discussion of what "will" meant for Augustine, 220–21. Rigby, "Augustine's Doctrine of Predestination" (see note 18), contends that the inscrutability of God's will is key to Augustine's understanding of election and damnation; why one is saved and another is not is beyond our knowing, and for Rigby it is this unknowing that saves Augustine's doctrine of predestination from "arbitrariness and vengeance" (220), thus ensuring freedom for humans (221–2), with grace constituting predestination's "most authentic level" (220).

**22** See, for example, Pelikan, "An Augustinian Dilemma" (see note 18), 9–10, where he briefly discusses the dispute between Hincmar of Reims, who thought that Augustine taught that God's grace is mediated through the Church and her sacraments, and Gottschalk of Orbais, who thought that Augustine taught strict dual predestination based on the supreme sovereignty of the divine will.

**23** Johannes Van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities*. Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements, 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 92.

contempt of self. The one, therefore, glories in itself, the other in the Lord; the one seeks glory from men, the other finds its highest glory in God, the Witness of our conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory, the other says to its God: "Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head."<sup>24</sup>

The Church here and now, however, cannot be simply identified with the heavenly city.<sup>25</sup> There are a number of ideas at work here. First, there is the nature of this life, where those predestined to be saved and those predestined to be damned are mingled, and there is the inability to have any certainty as to who belongs in which of these two groups.<sup>26</sup> There is moreover, Augustine's pessimism, understandable in the context of a small, persecuted church, that only a small portion of the baptized will be saved.<sup>27</sup> Finally, Augustine includes the saints of the Old Testament in the City of God, and admits the possibility that those outside of Israel, such as Job, are among those predestined to glory.<sup>28</sup> For all of these reasons it seems that the one-to-one identification of the City of God and the Earthly Church was not one that Augustine was prepared to make, and yet it is just such an identification that allowed many medieval authors to use Augustine to their own ends.

## The Use of Augustine in Giles of Rome

Several important theorists of papal supremacy turned to Augustine for support in their writings. One of the most prominent of these was Giles of Rome, who

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<sup>24</sup> "Fecerunt itaque ciuitates duas amores duo, terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei, caelestem uero amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui. Denique illa in se ipsa, haec in Domino gloriatur. Illa enim quaerit ab hominibus gloriam; huic autem Deus conscientiae testis maxima est gloria. Illa in gloria sua exaltat caput suum; haec dicit Deo suo: 'Gloria mea et exaltans caput meum,'" *DCD* (see note 17), 14.28, 632.

<sup>25</sup> For what follows, see R. W. Dyson, "Introduction," *DCD* (see note 17), xx–xxi; Deane, *Political and Social Ideas* (see note 14), 24–25, 30–38, cf. Pelikan, "An Augustinian Dilemma" (see note 18), 18–22.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, *DCD* (see note 17), 11.12, 465–66.

<sup>27</sup> Although baptism was, of course, necessary to salvation ever since the Incarnation, see Augustine, *De baptismo contra donatistas*, 5.27–28, *PL* 43:195–98, an English translation is available in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, volume 4, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company 1897, reprinted Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 476–78, and *De correptione et gracia*, 9.20–2, *PL* 44:927–29, available in English translation in Peter King, ed. and trans., *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 202–04.

<sup>28</sup> *DCD* (see note 17), 18.47, 893–94.



dedicated his work *De ecclesiastica potestate* (“On Ecclesiastical Power”) to Pope Boniface VIII.<sup>29</sup> The work was written at the height of the conflict between Boniface and King Philip IV (The Fair) of France (r. 1284–1314), probably appearing in 1302. The conflict between these two powers forms the background to the work, which sets out to demonstrate that the pope is ruler of the entire world. Boniface himself more or less said the same thing in his famous bull, *Unam sanctam* of 18 November 1302, where he claimed that the two swords, that is the temporal and spiritual power,<sup>30</sup> were both wielded by the pope; the spiritual (and higher) directly, and the temporal indirectly. This meant, of course, that the temporal powers ought to be subject to the spiritual, and that the pope had not only the right, but the duty to interfere in temporal affairs.<sup>31</sup>

Giles’s argument in support of papal claims to temporal power is thorough and meticulous, with arguments ranging from interpretations of key passages of scripture (Matthew 16:18–19; Jeremiah 1:10)<sup>32</sup> to arguments from contemporary understandings of natural science,<sup>33</sup> in addition to arguments drawn from the Church Fathers and more contemporary authorities, such as Hugh of St. Victor (1096–1141) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153).<sup>34</sup> It is the use of Augustine that most concerns us here, of course, and in this Giles put forward popular medieval interpretations. The relationship between a true commonwealth and justice is one that is very important to Giles’ argument; several times he refers to two passages from Augustine’s *City of God*, 2:21, “There is no true justice save in that commonwealth whose founder and ruler is Christ,” and 4:4, “Justice removed, what are kingdoms but great bands of robbers?”<sup>35</sup> To Giles it is obvious that the pope, as Christ’s vicar, supplies this justice, for he holds to

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29 For what follows, see R. W. Dyson, “Introduction,” *Giles of Rome’s On Ecclesiastical Power: A Medieval Theory of World Government*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), xi–xx.

30 The *locus classicus* for this theory is the *De consideratione* of St. Bernard, 4.3, found in *PL* 182:776–77 and in Bernard of Clairvaux, *Five Books on Consideration*, trans. John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Kennan (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 116–19.

31 The text of *Unam sanctam* can be found, e.g., in Tierney (see note 6): 188–89.

32 Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (see note 5), 17, 93. On another interpretation of these passages, see Ken Grant, “A Divine Mandate: Pope Gregory VII’s Defense of Papal Authority,” in this volume.

33 Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (see note 5), 31–33.

34 Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (see note 5), *passim*.

35 “Uera autem iustitia non est nisi in ea re publica, cuius conditorque Christus est,” *DCD* 2: 2; and “... remota itaque iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia?” *DCD* 4:4 (see note 17); Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (see note 5), 25, 285, 293, 375, 381–83.

a hierarchical conception of justice. Giles states that the pope holds the “supreme and highest rank in the Church and in the spiritual power,”<sup>36</sup> and it is through this spiritual power that the whole world ought to be governed, as God has set up the world in such a way that lower powers (temporal) are under the higher powers (spiritual).<sup>37</sup>

One of Giles’s opponents, the author of the *Quaestio de potestate papae (rex pacificus)*, summarized Giles’s argument in this way:

Again, Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 2:21, says this: “A commonwealth cannot be ruled without justice.” Now there is not true justice in the commonwealth of which Christ is not the ruler. But the commonwealth of the Christian people ought to be just and true. Therefore, Christ ought to be the ruler in it. But the Pope is the vicar of Christ ... . Therefore the Pope is the ruler of the commonwealth even in temporal affairs.<sup>38</sup>

The author of *Rex pacificus* goes on to refute this argument, but he has nonetheless summarized the thrust of Giles’s argument neatly. The ability to make this argument lies in a particular interpretation of Augustine, in this case one that posits a one-to-one correspondence between the *civitas Dei* and the visible church:

Once the Church was identified with the City of God, Augustine could be used to support the view that the authority of the Church and of the Pope was immeasurably superior to the authority of temporal rulers and, indeed, that all power (*plenitudo potestatis*) rested in the hands of the Pope, who then delegated to secular authorities the power to deal with temporal affairs.<sup>39</sup>

That Giles subscribes to such an interpretation of Augustine is clear from his handling, for example, of the typological understanding of Noah’s Ark as the Church, an analogy taken from *City of God*:

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36 “... Potestas terrena debet regi et gubernari per potestatem spiritualem et ecclesiasticam, et specialiter per Summum Pontificem, qui in Ecclesia et in spirituali potestate tenet apicem et supremum gradum.” Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (see note 5), 27.

37 Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (see note 5), 21–29.

38 “Item, Augustinus secundo *De civitate Dei* cap. XXI dicit sic: *Sine iustitia non potest regi respublica*. Vera autem iustitia non est in republica cuius Christus non est rector. Sed respublica populi Christiani debet esse recta et vera. Ergo in ea Christus debet esse rector. Sed papa est Christi vicarius ... Ergo papa rector est reipublicae etiam in temporalibus,” *Quaestio de Potestate Papae (Rex Pacificus)*, ed. and trans. R.W. Dyson (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 9.

39 Deane, *Political and Social Ideas* (see note 14), 232.

For just as none were saved at the time of the Flood except those who were in the ark and under Noah, so in this flood, in this inundation of waters and storms—that is, in this world, in this great and spacious sea, where there are not only storms but also creeping things without number, that is, enemies of many different kinds—no one will be saved, no one can achieve salvation, except through the Ark of Noah, that is, the Church, and unless he is under Noah, that is, under the Supreme Pontiff.<sup>40</sup>

The chapters previous to this had argued that the Church holds both the spiritual sword to use and the temporal sword to command.<sup>41</sup> The analogy of the Ark as Church appears, moreover, in a chapter dealing with rights of clerics to own property. There is, therefore, a clear identification here of the visible church with that prefigured in the story of Noah and the flood. Augustine certainly thought that membership in the visible church was necessary to salvation, but there is also here an extra step, not found in Augustine's interpretation, of identifying Noah with the pope. Another interpretation of Augustine was, of course, possible, and to such an interpretation we now turn as we look at Wyclif's use of the Bishop of Hippo.

## Wyclif, Augustine, and Papal Authority

From the start it should be recognized that Giles and Wyclif were drawing from a common pool of sources and ideas. Both men quote extensively from such works as Hugh of St. Victor's *De sacramentis* and Bernard of Clairvaux's *De consideratione*, as well as from Augustine's *De genesi ad litteram*, *De doctrina christiana*, *De civitate Dei*, and the *Enchiridion*.<sup>42</sup> Wyclif even has recourse to Boniface VIII's

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**40** "Nam nulli fuerunt salvati tempore diluvii nisi qui fuerunt in archa sub Noe, sic in hoc diluvio, in hac inundacione aquarum et procellarum, id est in hoc seculo, in hoc mari magno et spacio, ubi non solum sunt porcelles sed eciam sunt reptilia quorum non est numerus, id est diversa genera inimicorum, nullus salvabitur, nullus potest consequi salutem, nisi per archam Noe, id est per Ecclesiam, et nisi sit sub Noe, id est sub Summo Pontifice," Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (see note 5), 65; Cf. Augustine, *DCD* (see note 17), 15.26.

**41** Augustine, *DCD* (see note 17), Part I, chapters VII–IX.

**42** References to these works in both authors are too numerous to list here: see instead the indices to Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (see note 5), 404–406, and to Wyclif, *DPP* (see note 9), 409–11, id., *Polemical Works in Latin*, ed. Johann Loserth, 2 vols. (London: Wyclif Society, 1883; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprints, 1966), 2:715–18, id., *De ecclesia* (see note 6), 597–600. This last work contains more than a hundred references to Augustine, a large proportion of which are drawn from canon law. My hunch is that this extensive use of canon law, apart from demonstrating Wyclif's familiarity with the subject, is an attempt to neutralize its use by his opponents, since he was evidently able to access Augustine's works through other means.

bull *Unam sanctam*, although he is aware that he interprets it differently than the author intended.<sup>43</sup> The focus here, of course, will be on Wyclif's interpretation of Augustine, which opposes that of Giles quite strongly.

The foundation of Wyclif's ecclesiology rests on Augustine's teaching on predestination; there are some human beings who are predestined to beatification, and there are some who are foreknown to damnation, and these two groups make up the entirety of humankind.<sup>44</sup> Wyclif, as we have seen with Augustine, is not therefore deterministic; for Wyclif, it is our actions in time that are the cause of our election or damnation, and it is God's eternal knowledge of what we do that is shown through the terms predestined and foreknown.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, those who are predestinate are identified with the true Church by Wyclif, and thus when he says that the Church militant does not include any of the damned, he says so with the unspoken understanding that he is referring to the Church as it is known to God eternally and not to the church within time; the real point for Wyclif is that the predestinate and the foreknown cannot be mingled in the one, pure body of Christ which is the Church.<sup>46</sup> There can thus be no salvation outside of this one Church in Wyclif's understanding, since those foreknown to damnation are excluded from it by definition.

The same cannot be said, however, of the visible church, which Wyclif, following Augustine's lead, recognized was a mixture of foreknown and predestined. Wyclif believed that the foreknown (*praesciti*) could be among the members of the visible church, but were, nonetheless, always foreknown to perdition and therefore not members of the true Church.<sup>47</sup> Nor could ecclesiastical office ensure that the holder was among the elect; even the pope could be among the foreknown: "No vicar of Christ should presume to assert that he is the head of the Holy Catholic Church unless he has received a special revelation, nor should he even assert that he is a member."<sup>48</sup> Of course, this

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<sup>43</sup> *De ecclesia* (see note 6), 7, 25–47.

<sup>44</sup> On Wyclif and predestination, see Takashi Shogimen, "Wyclif's Ecclesiology and Political Thought," *A Companion to John Wyclif: Late Medieval Theologian*, ed. Ian Christopher Levy. Brill's *Companions to the Christian Tradition*, 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 199–240; Stephen Lahey, *John Wyclif* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 182–89; and Michael Wilks, "Predestination, Property and Power: Wyclif's Theory of Dominion and Grace," *Studies in Church History* 2 (1965): 220–36; reprinted in id., *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2000), 16–32.

<sup>45</sup> Lahey, *John Wyclif* (see note 44), 182–86.

<sup>46</sup> Lahey, *John Wyclif* (see note 44), 187, see *De ecclesia* (see note 6), 1–5.

<sup>47</sup> Shogimen, "Wyclif's Ecclesiology" (see note 44), 216–17. See *De Ecclesia* (see note 6), 1, 61, 140 and *passim*.

<sup>48</sup> *De Ecclesia* (see note 6), p. 1, quoted by Shogimen, "Wyclif's Ecclesiology" (see note 44), 217.

leaves Wyclif open to a charge of Donatism,<sup>49</sup> but a closer reading of Wyclif shows this to be a false accusation, since Wyclif never rejected the sacramental power of priests in mortal sin.<sup>50</sup> In basing his ecclesiology so firmly on the doctrine of predestination, “Wyclif was simply pressing the Augustinian doctrine of predestination to its logical limit.”<sup>51</sup> This resulted in a deinstitutionalization of the Church by making Christ the sole head and sole font of all priestly power, thus removing the need for mediation of such power through the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>52</sup> For Wyclif, this had the direct consequence of devaluing the papacy’s claim to *plenitudo potestatis*, and causing him to reject the headship of the bishops of Rome.<sup>53</sup> This rejection of the Roman papacy and spiritualization of the church did not lead to a wholesale rejection of hierarchy. Wyclif followed Robert Grosseteste in insisting “that the maintenance of a true hierarchy may require opposition to any who subvert it, even if subversion comes from on high.”<sup>54</sup> Wyclif, of course, diverged from Grosseteste in his rejection of the Roman papacy and its claims, pressing Grosseteste’s arguments farther than their original author intended.

To come back once more to the specifics of Wyclif’s understanding of the papacy, he places special emphasis on the three virtues that made Peter most fit to be chief of the Apostles: faith, humility, and charity. “The pre-eminence of Peter among the other [apostles] does not rest in honor, in worldly power or glory, but in altogether their opposites. It should be clear from this that it

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<sup>49</sup> Donatism was an ancient Christian heresy which argued that priests and bishops who were in a state of mortal sin were unable to perform the sacraments, thus invalidating any ordinations performed by sinful bishops or Eucharists performed by sinful priests. In the case of the Donatists, mortal sin referred to those who had handed over Christian Scriptures to Roman authorities during times of persecution, but this category later expanded to cover all forms of sin.

<sup>50</sup> *De Ecclesia* (see note 6), 448. See Shogimen, “Wyclif’s Ecclesiology” (see note 44), 217; Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 72; Ian Christopher Levy, “John Wyclif and the Primitive Papacy,” *Viator* 38.2 (2007): 159–89; here 188; and id., “Was John Wyclif’s Theology of the Eucharist Donatistic?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 53.2 (2000): 137–53.

<sup>51</sup> Shogimen, “Wyclif’s Ecclesiology” (see note 44), 217.

<sup>52</sup> Shogimen, “Wyclif’s Ecclesiology” (see note 44), 217. See John Wyclif, *De Civili Dominio*, ed. Reginald Lane Poole and Johann Loserth, 4 vols. (London: Wyclif Society, 1885–1904), 1:281, 288.

<sup>53</sup> Shogimen, “Wyclif’s Ecclesiology” (see note 44), 217–20.

<sup>54</sup> David Luscombe, “Wyclif and Hierarchy,” *Studies in Church History, Subsidia 5: From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks (Oxford: Blackwell’s 1987), 233–44; here 243; cf. Levy, “Wyclif and the Primitive Papacy” (see note 50), 180–83.

rests in his sincere faith, and humility, and in service.”<sup>55</sup> Wyclif argues that the true pope “is specifically that bishop, who in the highest, most similar and closest way takes the place of Christ, just as Peter did after the ascension, and we usually say that the Roman Pontiffs do.”<sup>56</sup> Wyclif concedes that the Roman bishop was often pope, but he does not concede that it is necessarily so, and argues that, in fact, “frequently since the endowment of the Church the papacy has been separated from the Roman pontiff ....”<sup>57</sup> Here we see another fundamental difference between Wyclif and Giles. For Wyclif, the sanctity of the man assuming the office is key, whereas for Giles, it is the office itself that is holy, sometimes in spite of the occupant, but this is unlikely, as the one for whom the entire Church prays is almost certainly holy.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, for Wyclif the doctrine of predestination forms the centerpiece of his ecclesiology, at once providing the foundation for the identity of the true Church and undermining the certainty that any officeholder can have that they are among the predestined. His emphasis is on the holiness needed to occupy high office in the visible church, and it is a difference of emphasis and not kind between Wyclif and other medieval thinkers here, which is at least susceptible to a suspicion of Donatism, even if such a charge proves untenable.

## Conclusion

Giles of Rome and John Wyclif represent two strands of the interpretation of Augustine in the Middle Ages, the one arguing that the *civitas Dei* can be identified with the visible church, using this interpretation to exalt the Church’s hierarchy over that of secular rulers, and the other pressing Augustine’s teaching on predestination so far as almost to undermine the structure of that same visible church by introducing an extreme uncertainty about who is and who is not saved. Augustine himself might not have

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55 “Preeminencia Petri in alios non stat in honore, in dominatu vel gloria seculari sed in omnino oppositis. Patet primo ex hoc quod stat in fidei sinceritate et humilitate et in servitute.” *DPP* (see note 9), 135. See also, Levy, “John Wyclif and the Primitive Papacy” (see note 50), 174–75.

56 “Suppono quod [papa] specialiter significet illum episcopum, qui gerit altissime, simillime et propinquissime vicem Christi, sicut fecit Petrus post ascensionem, et regulariter dicimus quod faciunt Romani pontifices.” *DPP* (see note 9), 166.

57 “Frequenter post dotacionem ecclesie seperatus est papatus a Romane pontifice ...” *DPP* (see note 9), 181.

58 Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (see note 5), 11.

identified with either of these interpretations, which both seem to misinterpret his words in different ways. It seems that Wyclif was closer to Augustine in associating the *civitas Dei* with the predestined rather than with the visible church, but that his position on predestination might not have taken into account sufficiently Augustine's comments on the necessity of membership in the visible church.<sup>59</sup> Giles, on the other hand, has so completely identified the visible church and the *civitas Dei* that he has almost made membership in it the one necessary act to gain salvation. Nonetheless, it is not difficult to see how both of these interpretations, despite their complete incompatibility, could arise out of the ambiguity inherent in the writings of Augustine. Both of these interpretations are plausible, both, to varying degrees, had exponents during the entire medieval period, and both demonstrate quite neatly how an authority can be made to say what one wants this person to say.

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<sup>59</sup> See Augustine, *De baptismo* (see note 27), 5.27–8.





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## **Secular Authority**



Sverre Bagge

# From Fist to Scepter: Authority in Norway in the Middle Ages

## Introduction

And when the tables were set, Ofeig put his fist on the table and said, “How big does that fist seem to you, Gudmund?”

“Big enough,” he said.

“Do you suppose there is any strength in it?” asked Ofeig.

“I certainly do,” said Gudmund.

“Do you think it would deliver much of a blow,” asked Ofeig.

“Quite a blow,” Gudmund replied.

“Do you think it might do any damage?” continued Ofeig.

“Broken bones or a deathblow,” Gudmund answered.

“How would such an end appeal to you?” asked Ofeig.

“Not much at all, and I wouldn’t choose it,” said Gudmund.

Ofeig said, “Then don’t sit in my place.”<sup>1</sup>

In this story from the Icelandic *Ljósvetninga saga*, power is concentrated in a big fist in a confrontation between two men, in a way resembling Thomas Hobbes’s (1588–1679) characterization of primitive man, whose life is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”<sup>2</sup> There is a constant competition and the physically strongest is likely to win, as in the competition for leadership among animals, where the strongest wins and is then challenged when getting older and weaker. Admittedly, competition has a social aspect, which Hobbes also accepted. Its prize is not a material object; Ófeigr and Guðmundr are not competing for the most comfortable chair, but for the seat of honor. This is also a typical object of competition in medieval society; there are many other examples.<sup>3</sup> What makes this case particularly interesting is the difference in

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1 *Ljósvetninga saga*, ed. Björn Sigfússon. Íslenzk Fornrit, 10 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornrita-félag, 1940), ch. 21: 58–59. Quoted from William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), 29f.

2 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or, The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-wealth, ecclesiasticall and civill* (Hamilton, Ontario: McMaster University, 1999 [orig. 1651]), 78.

3 Hans-Werner Goetz, “Der ‘rechte’ Sitz. Die Symbolik von Rang und Herrschaft im Hohen Mittelalter im Spiegel der Sitzordnung,” *Symbole des Alltags: Alltag der Symbole. Festschrift für Harry Kühnel zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Gertrud Blaschitz, Harry Kühnel, et al. (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1992), 11–47.

rank between the two competitors. Guðmundr inn ríki (the Powerful) Eyjólfsson is a chieftain, whereas Ófeigr Járngerðarson is a commoner. Nevertheless, the latter wins because of his greater physical strength, which illustrates the relatively egalitarian and competitive character of Icelandic society. Although not everybody could become a leader, personal qualities, including physical strength, were more important than in most other medieval societies. The leader had to have sufficient charisma and martial skills to compete with rivals, and sufficient wealth, legal skills, and generosity to satisfy his adherents. The sagas of the Icelanders, as well as those of the Norwegian kings, give vivid glimpses of this kind of competitive society.

Bureaucratic or hierarchical authority means that the fist is replaced with a symbol, the bishop's staff (*baculus*) or the king's sword or scepter. All symbolize a function similar to the fist, being instruments of aggression or punishment, in a more or less direct form. However, they are not parts of the body but are received, normally through some form of official ceremony. They eventually developed into precise expressions of a particular office, symbolizing legally granted power in an ordered society. There might still be competition over appointment to such offices, but eventually according to increasingly formalized rules, enacted in papal, episcopal or royal elections. Once in office, the incumbent had certain legally defined rights and duties, although in practice, he might still have to compete with other office-holders. Physical power was still important, but high-ranking officials did not depend on their personal strength; they could command their subordinates to fight for them or to punish their enemies.

In the following, I shall discuss the new ideas of authority that were developed in Norway in the twelfth and particularly the thirteenth century in three different fields, (1) royal and ecclesiastical government, (2) law and legal evidence and (3) the writing of history. First, however, I shall deal with the terminology itself.

## The Terminology: *Auctoritas* and *Veldi*

The term *auctoritas* is an important expression of this development in medieval society. *Auctoritas* is derived from *augere*, to increase, and was originally used in the sense of prestige or respect rather than power or authority in the modern sense.<sup>4</sup> In the Roman Republic, the Senate had *auctoritas*, which did not mean

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<sup>4</sup> For this and the following, see Horst Rabe, "Autorität," *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Hi-*

the power to decide—this belonged to the people—but the prestige that made its opinion important for those who decided. Corresponding to this, there were different terms for decisions in the senate and the popular assemblies, expressed in the terms “*placuit senatui*” (“it pleased the senate”) versus “*populus romanus iussit*” (“the Roman people ordered”). The senate proposed a certain course of action, which had to be accepted by the people to be put into effect. Although it was highly unusual for the people to reject a proposal by the senate, the formal distinction between the two bodies was clear. When used about individuals, *auctoritas* meant prestige because of rank, wisdom or learning, as in the expression *auctoritas maiorum*.

The victory of Christianity introduced a terminological change; *auctoritas* now became the crucial term, authority in the modern sense, when used about ecclesiastical office. God has the highest *auctoritas*, which He delegates to the bishops and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Thus when Gelasius I (r. 492–496) in his famous statement contrasts “*auctoritas sacrata pontificum*” with “*regalis potestas*,” *auctoritas* has become the higher of the two, at least in later interpretations of the statement.<sup>5</sup> The Christian *auctoritas* is not the physical and administrative means to execute an order or force people to obey, but the expression of wisdom and insight derived from God. Christianity is a doctrine from which the administrative power is derived; consequently, *auctoritas* is the right word for ecclesiastical office. According to later ecclesiastical doctrine, as developed by the papacy, royal power is derived from that of the Church, as expressed metaphorically in Luke 22:38. Here the disciples say: “We have two swords,” to which Christ answers: “It is enough.” This was later understood as an allusion to the two powers on earth, the spiritual and the secular, and interpreted to mean that the pope, Peter’s successor, had received both powers but delegated the secular one to the emperor, a doctrine that was contested by the monarchy.<sup>6</sup> Both, however, agreed that power on earth was derived from God.

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*storisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* I, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhard Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), 382–88.

<sup>5</sup> Rabe, “Autorität” (see note 4), 387 with reference; R. A. Markus, “The Latin Fathers,” 102 and I. A. Robinson, “Church and Papacy,” 288 f., both in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350–c. 1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 92–122, 252–305.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Lecler, “L’argument des deux glaives dans les controverses politiques du moyen âge,” *Recherches de science religieuse* XXI (1931): 299–339; cf. Sverre Bagge, *The Political Thought of The King’s Mirror* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987), 114–15, 138–40 with references.

The Old Norse equivalent to *auctoritas* seems to be *vald* or *veldi*, derived from Indo-European *\*ual*, to be strong, cf. Lat *valere*.<sup>7</sup> Immediately, this seems to suggest a strong connection to physical power, as in the modern Norwegian *vold*, which means violence. *Voldsmann* in modern Norwegian means assailant, whereas its Old Norse etymological equivalent (*valdsmaðr*) means a person of authority. Actually, however, *vald* in the sense of physical power is rare in Old Norse. The examples of this meaning in the laws, five altogether, are late, possibly influenced from Danish and Swedish, where this sense is more usual. Although the term *konungsveldi* (country governed by the king) occurs already in the Law of Guláping, *vald/veldi* are mostly to be found in the newer laws in the sense of authority or office.<sup>8</sup> *Vald* is also used about private people's rights, for instance to property or their right to choose.

Although the original sense of *vald/veldi* may be different, it seems that the term is used in the thirteenth century as a translation of *auctoritas*. This sense is particularly prominent in *The King's Mirror*. Although the author shows no reluctance in pointing to the physical aspect of the king's power, elaborating on his sword and staff or whip and insisting on the use of the death penalty,<sup>9</sup> he is strongly influenced by ecclesiastical ideas about authority. He points to the parallel between the secular and the ecclesiastical hierarchy and regards the king as God's representative on earth. Above all, he emphasizes wisdom as the king's main virtue, thus linking power and intellectual insight in the same way as in the ecclesiastical interpretation of *auctoritas*.<sup>10</sup>

## Kingship, Dynasty and the Social Order

The kingdom of Norway was formed by conquest, mostly by Viking chieftains returning home with gold, silver, armed men and military experience, but was eventually governed by consent, symbolic authority and relatively little violence. The ideological difference between the early and the later period can

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7 Klaus von See, *Altnordische Rechtswörter. Philologische Studien zur Rechtsauffassung und Rechtsgesinnung der Germanen*. Hermaea; germanistische Forschungen, n. F., 16 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964), 196–203.

8 E.g., *Landslög*, in *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387 II*, ed. Rudolf Keyser and Peter Andreas Munch (Christiania: Gröndahl, 1848) II.2, IX.1.3: "... sem sa maðr leggr a hann, er kgs ualld hefir i hende til rettra refsinga" = royal officer with delegated authority from the king and II.2: the king's and the bishop's *veldi*.

9 Bagge, *The Political Thought* (see note 6), 63f., 80f., 114–16.

10 Bagge, *The Political Thought* (see note 6), 22–26, 90–94.

be illustrated by a comparison between the Eddic poem *Rígsþula*, probably dating from the Viking Age, and *A Speech against the Bishops* (ca. 1200) and *The King's Mirror* (ca. 1255).<sup>11</sup> The former is a pamphlet in defense of the monarchy against the Church from the last years of the reign of King Sverrir Sigurðarson (1177–1202) who at the time was excommunicated by the pope. The latter is a treatise about society and the moral and practical obligations of its various ranks, ending with a detailed account of the king's power and duties. *Rígsþula* describes three categories of people, the slave, the farmer, and the earl, with a hint at the emergence of the king from the rank of earls. The three classes differ from each other through wealth, lifestyle and bodily beauty, while nothing is said about the relationship between them. The *Speech* uses the human body as an allegory of society, listing various ranks in the ecclesiastical and secular hierarchy which have to act together to make a harmonious body. The king has a crucial role as the heart of the body and thus as its intellectual as well as governing center.

*The King's Mirror* gives a similar picture of the king, by presenting wisdom as his main virtue and emphasizing his supreme power and the obedience all inhabitants owe him. The author does not use the human body as an allegory, but instead alludes to the theory of the orders or estates of society. He presents one of the earliest examples of four rather than three such categories: the secular aristocracy (the royal retainers), the clergy, the merchants, and the peasants. Essentially, however, the two sources express the same doctrine. Compared to *Rígsþula*, their hierarchy has become stricter. Farmers and slaves have merged into one category at the bottom of society, representing the vast majority of the population. At the same time, the organic character of society is emphasized. All estates and categories are supposed to work together for the common good; all have their particular place. From point of view of authority, *Rígsþula* represents a competitive society where rank is the result of success or failure in the competition, whereas the two later sources represent an order instituted by God, where rank is granted by divine providence and entails duties as well as rights.

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<sup>11</sup> For the following, see Sverre Bagge, "Old Norse Theories of Society: From *Rígsþula* to *Konungs skuggsiá*," *Speculum regale: Der altnorwegische Königsspiegel (Konungs skuggsiá) in der europäischen Tradition*, ed. Jens Eike Schnall and Rudolf Simek. *Studia Mediaevalia Septentrionalia*, 5 (Vienna: Fassbinder, 2000), 7–45. There are different opinions about the date of *Rígsþula*; some scholars believe that it was composed in the thirteenth century, e.g., Klaus von See, "Das Alter der *Rígsþula*," in his *Edda, Saga, Skaldendichtung* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1981), 84–95.

Both categories of sources represent models and ideals rather than practice; the actual changes from the Viking Age to the thirteenth century may be less than indicated by them. However, other evidence indicates that some change did occur through the introduction of Christianity and the development of the ecclesiastical and royal hierarchy. The concept of an office is crucial in this respect. The most obvious example of this is the development of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which took place in Norway from the late eleventh century onwards and had reached a level similar that of the rest of Europe in the thirteenth century. The ecclesiastical hierarchy largely served as a model for the secular one, although with some important differences. As is evident in the two sources we have examined so far, the crucial factor in the secular sphere is the development of the royal office.

The distinction between the king in person and his office is a central element in ecclesiastical thought and may possibly have been introduced in Norway already in the period of Christianization. It is very prominent in the ecclesiastical documents issued in connection with the first Norwegian coronation in 1163/64 and increasingly important in the royalist sources of the following period, such as *The Speech*, *The King's Mirror* and the laws of the second half of the thirteenth century.<sup>12</sup> In practice, its development is closely connected to that of the dynasty.

According to the sagas, the dynasty goes back to Haraldr inn hárfagri (Fairhair) Hálfðanarson (d. around 930) who conquered the whole country and became its first king. Haraldr had a number of sons, who fought among themselves for the control of the country, while in addition being challenged by the kings of Denmark and the earls of Lade. Finally, however, one line of Haraldr's descendants emerged as victorious, first under St. Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson (reigned 1015–1030) and then, after his defeat and death, under his son Magnús inn góði (the Good) Ólafsson (r. 1035–1047) and his half-brother Haraldr inn harðráði (Hard-ruler) Sigurðarson (r. 1047–1066), whose descendants ruled the country in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the sagas were composed. Actually, there are reasons to believe that this genealogy is fictional, that Haraldr's line died out already in the second half

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<sup>12</sup> Torfinn Tobiasen, "Tronfølgelov og privilegiebrev: En studie i kongedømmets ideologi under Magnus Erlingsson," *Historisk tidsskrift* 43 (1964): 181–273; Bagge, *The Political Thought* (see note 6), 25, 92, 94 and Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900–1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010), 157–65.



of the tenth century and that there was still open competition for the throne until the mid-eleventh century, possibly even later.<sup>13</sup>

We can therefore distinguish between three periods in the history of the Norwegian monarchy. In the first, from Harald's death to the mid-eleventh century, there was open competition; the accession to the throne was a question of personal skills and the ability to mobilize others to fight for one's claim. Next, there was a period of limited competition (ca. 1050–1260), when it was necessary to be recognized as a member of the dynasty in order to claim the throne, but when there was no rule giving priority to any particular descendant and several kings might rule at the same time, peacefully or in mutual conflict. Finally, individual succession and primogeniture were introduced with the Law of Succession of 1260. Now, the previous king's eldest son had the right to succeed him, and this and the following laws specified in increasing detail the rights of the king's various relatives if he had no sons. Thus, the fist was gradually replaced by the scepter, and the idea of the royal office became increasingly important.

Admittedly, the strength of this idea during the second period is open to discussion. It would seem that the importance of royal descent was based on a biological idea of the royal blood, which gave the members of the dynasty greater abilities than others to be the leaders of men, an idea that can probably be traced back to pagan times. Originally, however, these abilities were not reserved for the king—whatever the king may have been in this period—but were shared between a number of powerful dynasties, in accordance with the idea of the fist. The breakthrough for the idea of dynastic succession in the eleventh century may have had some connection with an increase in the actual power of the king, but also with Óláfr's sanctity. Although in ecclesiastical thought, sanctity is personal and not hereditary, there is clear evidence that Óláfr's sanctity was important for the status of the dynasty, thus forming a transition from the second to the third stage in the development.

Concerning this development, there is a conflict between the idea of the royal blood and the idea of an office, held by one person at the time. Biologically, all the king's sons are equal and even other members of the dynasty may be considered to have the same qualities, dependent on the particular ideas of kinship in a particular society. The idea of an office normally implies election, as in the case of the Church. In accordance with this, the first Law of

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<sup>13</sup> Claus Krag, "Norge som odel i Harald Hårfagres ætt," *Historisk tidsskrift* 68 (1989): 288–302; Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold* (see note 12), 165–70.

Succession, issued in 1163/64 under strong influence from the Church, introduced royal election, although with preference for descendants of the late king, particularly his eldest legitimate son. However, this law was never practiced, and the victorious dynasty in the thirteenth century, descended from King Sverrir, having fought a series of rivals, insisted on purely hereditary succession. In so far as there was a question of election, it was attributed to God. This was expressed in a drastic way in the Saga of Hákon IV Hákonarson (1217–1263), composed 1264–1265, which refers a discussion about the rights of Hákon's two sons, in which the king states that he will leave the matter to God. Two years later, God decided in favor of the younger by letting the elder die. Later, Hákon's grandson Hákon V Magnússon (1299–1319) explicitly refers to God's election of himself to succeed his father.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the dynasty represents a major stage towards bureaucratic kingship. First, the realm is defined as a geographical entity belonging to one particular ruler and transferred from him to his legitimate descendants. Second, there is an identifiable series of persons representing God on earth and entitled to obedience from the people. Thus, there is no more fighting over the best seat; it belongs to the king alone. Whereas kingship was hereditary, other offices were filled by royal appointment. Although private property was hereditary in Norway as in other European societies, political and bureaucratic office was not. The majority of the king's officers were probably recruited from the upper levels of society, but there was no automatic right to office even for its most prominent members. Thus, authority in society was largely the result of royal delegation and thus achieved by influencing the king, not by hereditary right or open competition.

## Law, Justice, and Legal Evidence

The field of justice, which underwent great changes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, forms one of the main expressions of the idea of the royal office as an institution and the king's power as delegated from God.

In the saga of Egill Skalla-Grímsson,<sup>15</sup> composed in the first half of the thirteenth century, the protagonist Egill goes to Norway to take possession of the inheritance of his wife Ásgerðr Bjarnardóttir, whose father has just died. To

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<sup>14</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold* (see note 12), 168–69.

<sup>15</sup> *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal. Íslenzk Fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1933), ch. 56: 155–57.

achieve his aim, Egill has to challenge his brother-in-law, Berg-Önundr Þorgeirsson, who claims that Ásgerðr has no right, because she descends from slaves and has not been born in legitimate marriage. The two parties meet at Gulapíng, the legal assembly in western Norway. They present their case before the judges, thirty-six altogether (twelve times three), who are seated in the middle of the plain where the þíng is assembled, surrounded by sacred ropes. Egill seems to have good chances, as his friend Arinbjörn Þórisson controls two thirds of the judges. In accordance with the law, Egill presents twelve men willing to swear to his wife's legitimate birth. However, Egill is the king's enemy, whereas Berg-Önundr is his friend, and the king is present at the þíng. The king is reluctant to intervene, but his wife, Gunnhildr Özurardóttir—the classical wicked queen of the sagas—has her men attack the court, cutting off the sacred ropes and chasing the judges away. A good case and lawful witnesses are of no use; the king and the queen are able to prevent the case from being settled. We may in addition note the reference in the saga to Arinbjörn's control of the court. Would this have been a more important factor than Ásgerðr's legitimate birth and Egill's oath-helpers if the king and queen had not been there? Was the problem from Egill's point of view not that the queen interrupted a legal proceeding, but that she cancelled the advantage Egill had because of his friendship with Arinbjörn?

The account in the saga is of course no exact report of what went on at Gulapíng in the mid-tenth century; actually, we do not know whether anything like this happened at all. However, there is plenty of evidence of similar situations in the Icelandic family sagas, which makes it likely that such situations could occur in the thirteenth century as well. There are also some Norwegian examples.<sup>16</sup>

Apparently, a similar episode occurred in the fourteenth century (1322), also in western Norway, this time at a local þíng at Avaldsnes on Karmøy, north of Stavanger. When Áslákr Brattson, representing Gyriðr Oddsdóttir and her daughter Gunvor, tried to present his witnesses to prove that Gyriðr had owned the Aurdal farm in common with her husband according to the law that was valid fifty-five years ago, he was prevented by shouting from a large crowd who declared the opposite party to be the owner of the farm. The lögmaðr (judge) forbade this and together with eleven others appealed to the

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<sup>16</sup> Sverre Bagge, "Law and Justice in Norway in the Middle Ages: A Case Study," *Medieval Spirituality in Scandinavia and Europe: A Collection of Essays in Honour of Tore Nyberg*, ed. Tore Samuel Nyberg, Lars Bisgaard, Carsten Selch Jensen, Kurt Villads Jensen, and John Lind. Odense University Studies of History and Social Sciences, 234 (Odense: Odense University Press, 2001), 73–85.

king and his council to settle the matter.<sup>17</sup> Although the similarity to the case in *Egils saga* is striking, the context is different. Now there is a royal representative, the lǫgmaðr, whose duty it is to apply and interpret the written law. The lǫgmaðr acts together with local men—the lǫgmaðr plus the eleven others resemble the units of twelve in *Egils saga* and the other early sources—but he is not simply the chairman of a committee; he has a higher authority, as his verdict can only be set aside by the king himself. In this case, the king also becomes the remedy against the illegal break-up of the assembly. The issue at stake on this occasion also points to the changes that had taken place since Egill's age. There is now an authoritative law code, the National Law, issued by the king as well as subject to revisions by him. The National Law replaced the provincial laws, although it included a considerable amount of material from them. In this particular case, there had been a change in the law of marriage, which implied that Gyriðr was not the legitimate heir. As she had been married in 1267, when the old Law of Gulaping, dating from the late eleventh or early twelfth century, was still valid, however, the lǫgmaðr and his followers pronounced in her favor, according to the principle—still valid in our laws—that a law cannot have retroactive force.

The development of a new legal authority can also be traced in other fields, two of which are particularly important. The first is the introduction of public justice and the concepts of crime and punishment. Whereas earlier, all cases were dealt with as conflicts between two parties who approached the court to settle the matter between them, now public prosecution was introduced, where the representative of the king or the bishop demanded punishment for a certain crime or misdemeanor. The novelty of this procedure is evident from the lack of a separate terminology. The terms for “crime” are generally derived from religious language, so that there was no clear distinction between crime and sin.<sup>18</sup> Correspondingly, there is no word for execution: *drepa* and *drap* is used for killings carried out by the authorities as well as by private individuals.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the vague terminology, however, the distinction between revenge and punishment is made very explicit in *The King's Mirror*, which forms the clearest and most systematic expression of the new principles of justice in its discussion about judgments.<sup>20</sup> Acting as God's representative on earth, the

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<sup>17</sup> *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* I, ed. Christian C. A. Lange and Carl R. Unger (Christiania: Mallings, 1847), nr. 168.

<sup>18</sup> Bagge, *The Political Thought* (see note 6), 66f.

<sup>19</sup> Klaus von See, *Königtum und Staat im skandinavischen Mittelalter*. Skandinavistische Arbeiten, 19 (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2002 [orig. Ph.D. diss., University of Hamburg, 1953]), 135–51.

<sup>20</sup> Bagge, *The Political Thought* (see note 6), 52–85.

king should judge each case objectively, according to the merits of the parties, and mete out punishment corresponding to the degree of guilt. He should not only consider the act in itself, but the intentions and circumstances, so as to strictly punish those who commit crimes out of arrogance and ill will and mildly punish those who do so out of ignorance or sudden loss of control. Here the author conveys the principle of subjective guilt, which was developed particularly in canon law, partly as a logical consequence of the view of crime as an offense against God and society, partly as a result of the greater emphasis on intention and inner life from the twelfth century onwards. The principles of *The King's Mirror* are largely reflected in the revision of the laws in the second half of the thirteenth century. At this time the peace legislation from the second half of the twelfth century was repeated and extended, particularly in Hákon Hákonarson's New Law of 1260, where—in accordance with the principles of *The King's Mirror*—it was forbidden to take revenge upon others than the killer himself, namely his relatives, as had been customary earlier, and an offer of settlement after a killing had to be accepted.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time the extensive and very complicated rules for compensation to the deceased's kindred were abolished; now only the nearest heir was entitled to compensation. In the National Law of 1274–1277 revenge was so severely curtailed as to be virtually banned. The deceased's relatives were only allowed to kill the culprit when he consistently refused to come to terms.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the principle of subjective guilt and the necessity for the judge to use his own discretion when settling the case are made explicit in a separate chapter of the National Law, strongly influenced by *The King's Mirror*.<sup>23</sup> These principles are also present in the royal representatives' (sýslumenn) detailed reports sent to the king with a killer asking for pardon, emphasizing the circumstances around the crime and the degree of provocation and whether or not—usually not—there had been any previous conflict between the killer and the victim. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know the importance of this information for the king's decision in the matter, as there are no examples of the sýslumenn's report and the king's decision having been preserved for the same case.

The development of royal and ecclesiastical justice also led to changes in the evaluation of evidence. Legal evidence had largely been formal in the earlier period, based either on compurgation or ordeal. Admittedly, witnesses also

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<sup>21</sup> *Norges gamle Love. Vol 1: Norges gamle Love indtil 1387*, ed. Rudolf Keyser and Peter Andreas Munch, vol. 1 (Christiania: Grøndal, 1846), 121–27.

<sup>22</sup> *Landsløg* (see note 8), IV.20.

<sup>23</sup> *Landsløg* (see note 8), IV.16–17; cf. Bagge, *The Political Thought* (see note 6), and Jørn Øyrehaugen Sunde, *Speculum legale: Rettsspegele* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2005), 151–54.

played an important role in the provincial laws, as most rights and contracts had to be attested by formally summoned witnesses (*skírskotningsvattar*). In the Law of Gulapíng, only such witnesses could prevent the defendant from freeing himself by compurgation, whereas the Law of Frostapíng and the Bjarkøy Law (the older urban law) in some cases let ordinary witnesses who testified to what they had seen or heard play the same role.<sup>24</sup> An important change occurred in the field of evidence when the Church, in 1215, forbade the clergy from participating in ordeals, which in the course of the thirteenth century led to their disappearance as legal evidence (in Norway from 1247). This created a problem, in Norway as in other countries. In the case of the most serious crimes, those punishable by death or outlawry, the ordeal would have served to take the burden of inflicting such punishments away from the human community by leaving the matter to God. Now the alternatives were either to let the guilty party off too easily or for the members of the court to be responsible for inflicting such punishments themselves. There were two ways to solve the dilemma: either by leaving the matter to the wisdom, legal skill and authority of a professional judge or to involve representatives of the community. The former solution was chosen in most of Continental Europe, inspired by Roman law and the canonical inquisitional process, and the latter in England where the jury gradually came to replace the ordeal. The Norwegian solution was somewhere in the middle between these two.

The National Law is surprisingly silent regarding legal evidence. It eliminated all the references to ordeals found in its sources, the provincial laws, but also most of the rules about how to identify the culprit, while still retaining compurgation. However, the question of how to identify the culprit when someone is killed is discussed explicitly. Here the testimony of witnesses is decisive, but the accused has the opportunity to prove his innocence if he can produce twelve men who are willing to swear that they were present with him at a place so far away from the site of the crime that he could not have committed it. Here the compurgators are not only men of good reputation, as in the provincial laws, but provide the necessary information to give the accused person an alibi, thus resembling witnesses rather than oath-helpers.<sup>25</sup> In other cases the law also restricts the defendant's opportunity to resort to compurgation when there are witnesses against him as well as his

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<sup>24</sup> Lars Hamre, "Edgärdsman," *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder: Fra vikingtid til reformasjonstid*, vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1958), col. 498.

<sup>25</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold* (see note 12), 213f.

right to select his compurgators.<sup>26</sup> In a general paragraph, inspired by *The King's Mirror*, the law underlines the judge's duty to use his own discretion, not only to follow the letter of the law,<sup>27</sup> which probably indicates the general attitude of King Magnús lagabætir (the Law-Mender) Hákonarson (1263–1280) and the circle of men responsible for the law. This applies particularly to meting out punishment, where the judge should consider the intention and circumstances and not only the act itself, but probably also to the question of evidence, as is directly stated in the paragraph about rape. When a woman declared that she had been raped and the accused denied it and there were no witnesses, a committee of twelve men was to decide whose statement was the more likely.<sup>28</sup>

The introduction of writing in law and legal procedure and of royal courts of law, headed by professional judges, meant a new concept of authority. Whereas the old legal system was based on competition between the two parties, where the line of division between legal and extra-legal means was thin, the new one was based on an authority above the parties, which was supposed to settle the cases according to general principles formulated in the law. Thus, once more, authority was derived from insight and intellectual capacity. Admittedly, the changes were no doubt greater in theory than in practice. There may have been other episodes like the one at Avaldsnes, unknown to us, and there were still ways for the strong and powerful to bend the law. Moreover, extensive use of arbitration and negotiation was common to both legal systems. If we compare the National Law with the earlier provincial laws, we also find considerably more continuity than we should expect from the purely ideological development. Admittedly, there was influence from canon and other learned law already in the provincial laws, but also a number of rules based on custom and practical considerations, which were included in the National Law. Nevertheless, there is enough written evidence to show that the legal reforms of the thirteenth century were far-reaching and had considerable practical effects. Once more, the scepter had replaced the fist; legal matters were ultimately subject to decision by an authority appointed by God, who was supposed to combine high rank with the most profound insight in justice and legal reasoning.

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<sup>26</sup> Hamre, "Edgärdsman" (see note 24), col. 495–98 with reference to *Landsløg* (see note 8), IV.26, VIII.27 and IX.13.

<sup>27</sup> *Landsløg* (see note 8), IV.17.

<sup>28</sup> *Landsløg* (see note 8), IV.4; cf. Sunde, *Speculum legale* (see note 23), 130f.

## Historical Evidence: *Scriptorum auctoritas* versus Local Tradition

So far, we have depicted the change from fist to scepter as a story of progress. Despite all that seems strange and backwards in Norway in the High Middle Ages, this period represents a step in the direction of the values underlying our own society, a society of peace and order, where conflicts are to be solved by legal procedure rather than violence. Moving to the third field, we meet the more problematic aspect of *auctoritas*, namely its use regarding empirical evidence. How can we know what happened in the past?

One of the earliest historical works, possibly the earliest, Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*, discusses this question. Theodoricus was a monk or cleric—we do not know whether the title “monachus” in the transcripts of the work from the seventeenth century was there in the original or is a later addition. He composed his history of Norway, dedicated to Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson (archep. 1161–1188), around 1180. A number of quotations and allusions in his work show a strong connection with the Augustinian community of St Victor in Paris, one of the most important centers of learning at the time. Theodoricus’ Norwegian name was probably Tore (Þórir). There were two bishops by that name at the time, the bishop of Hamar (1189/90–1196) and the archbishop of Nidaros (1206–1214), both of whom are mentioned in the obituary of St Victor. Theodoricus was probably identical with one of them. He is thus likely to have been a man of learning and distinction, an impression that is confirmed by the contents of his work.<sup>29</sup>

Theodoricus addresses the question of historical evidence already in the beginning of the prologue, immediately after the dedication to Archbishop Eysteinn. He presents his history of the Norwegian kings, according to what he has been able to find out by conscientiously consulting the Icelanders “among whom the memory of them is supposed to be particularly strong and who repeatedly recite these matters in their old chants.”<sup>30</sup> This has usually been interpreted as Theodoricus having talked to Icelanders with information

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<sup>29</sup> For this and the following, see Arne Odd Johnsen, *Om Theodoricus* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1939), 29–60, 89–94 and Sverre Bagge, “Theodoricus Monachus: Clerical Historiography in Twelfth-century Norway,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 14 (1989): 113–33; here 114–15.

<sup>30</sup> “Prout sagaciter perquirere potuimus ab eis ... quos nos Islendinga vocamus, qui hæc in suis antiquis carminibus percelebrata recolunt,” Theodoricus Monachus, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*, *Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ*, ed. Gustav Storm (Kristiania: Brøgger, 1880), 1–68; here 3.



about the past and heard them recite their poems, no doubt skaldic poetry.<sup>31</sup> However, as some recent scholars have pointed out, we cannot exclude the possibility that Theodoricus here refers to written sources, or possibly a combination of oral and written ones.<sup>32</sup> One possibility is that he has read one or both of the earliest Icelandic accounts of the early Norwegian kings, by Sæmundr inn fróði (the Wise) Sigfússon (d. 1133) or Ari inn fróði (the Wise) Porgilsson (1068–1148) and found the references to skaldic poetry there, but he may also have had direct access to the poems, with or without Ari. An important argument in favor of this hypothesis is the following passage about the beginning of his work. Although he does not doubt that his ancestors performed great deeds before Haraldr Fairhair, he cannot write about them, because their reputation had been destroyed by the scarcity of texts (*scriptorum*) about them. This would seem to mean that he did have written evidence about Haraldr, since he wrote about him. He may even have had some written evidence about the period before Haraldr, as “*inops opinio/inopia*” does not necessarily mean absence of texts, only scarcity. However, he also gives another reason for beginning his work with Haraldr, namely that there was no recognized royal line before him.<sup>33</sup> Finally, a little later in the prologue, Theodoricus once more discusses the question of evidence. Regarding the truth of his narrative, he has to rely on his sources, because he writes what “he has heard, not to what he has seen” (“*non visa sed audita conscripsimus*”). “*Visa*” as opposed to “*audita*” clearly refers to the distinction between being an eyewitness and having second-hand information, not to the distinction between written and oral evidence, although *audita* may of course refer to oral as well as written evidence.<sup>34</sup>

In the actual passage about Haraldr, he once more refers to the Icelanders, from whom he has gathered evidence regarding Haraldr’s accession to the throne

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31 Cf. Sigurður Nordal, *Om Olaf den helliges saga* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1914), 21–22, who suggests that Theodoricus’ informants were merchants and skalds.

32 Theodore M. Andersson, “Kings’ Sagas,” *Old Norse: Icelandic Literature. A Critical Guide*, ed. C. Clover and J. Lindow (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 197–238; here 211–12 with reference; Sverre Bagge, “The Making of a Missionary King: The Medieval Accounts of Olaf Trygvason and the Conversion of Norway,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 105 (2006): 473–513; here 485–91.

33 “*Nullam ratam regalis stemmatis successionem*,” Theodoricus, *Historia* (see note 30), 3.

34 Marie Schulz, *Die Lehre von der historischen Methode bei den Geschichtsschreibern des Mittelalters (VI.–XIII. Jahrhundert)*. Abhandlungen zur mittleren und neueren Geschichte, 13 (Berlin and Leipzig: Rothschild, 1909), 15–66 with numerous examples and quotations from the sources; Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l’Occident médiéval*. Collection historique (Paris: Aubier, 1980), 77–78; cf. Bagge, “Theodoricus” (see note 29), 124 n. 32.

and the length of his reign. This time, however, he explicitly refers to the lack of “*scriptorum auctoritas*.” Moreover, in both cases, his way of referring to the Icelanders seems to imply oral information: “*sagaciter perquirere*” (“carefully examining”) and “*investigatum prout diligentissime potuimus*” (“examined as thoroughly as we could”). Theodoricus has spent much time and effort in questioning his Icelandic experts. However, both verbs may also refer to tracing and studying texts. In the latter case, the question of the chronology of Haraldr’s reign, written information seems to be the more likely alternative; exact chronology is normally expressed in writing. Moreover, Theodoricus later refers to a *Catalogus regum*,<sup>35</sup> which most probably must have contained information about Haraldr’s reign. We then have to ask what Theodoricus meant by “*scriptorum auctoritas*.” Is this simply a more solemn term for “*scripta*” or “*scriptores*”, or does it have a more exact meaning?

A later passage, discussing St Óláfr’s baptism, where Theodoricus once more returns to the question of written or oral evidence, may suggest an answer. According to some sources, Óláfr was baptized as a child by his predecessor Óláfr Tryggvason (ca. 960–1000); according to others as an adult in England, whereas Theodoricus himself has read in the History of the Normans (by William of Jumièges) that he was baptized in Normandy by Bishop Robert of Rouen (d. 1037).<sup>36</sup> Theodoricus will not take a definite stand on the question, but favors the hypothesis that Óláfr was baptized as an adult, despite the fact that this contradicts the opinion of those who would be most likely to know, namely the Icelanders. He adds the comment that it is not surprising that this should happen in the case of Óláfr in a country where there has never been an “*antiquitatum scriptor*,” when St Jerome expresses similar doubts about the Emperor Constantine’s baptism. Here *antiquitatum scriptor* must mean a writer living in ancient times, not one writing about them, as Theodoricus explicitly refers to written evidence about St Óláfr’s baptism. He has read William and is probably also referring to written evidence about Óláfr’s baptism in England. Against this background, it would seem strange for him to have attached such importance to the Icelanders if he were only referring to oral reports, given his status as a learned cleric. If we use the term “*antiquitatum scriptor*” as an analogy in interpreting “*scriptorum auctoritas*,” we get some support for a more exact or restricted meaning of the latter. Not all *scripta* have *auctoritas*, in the same way as not all are ancient. Taken together with the likelihood that Theodoricus did have written evidence about Haraldr’s reign, this indicates

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<sup>35</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia* (see note 30), ch. 20: 44.

<sup>36</sup> Theodoricus, *Historia* (see note 30), ch. 13; cf. Bagge, “The Making” (see note 32), 489–91.

that he distinguished between *scripta* and “*scriptorum auctoritas*” and thus that he must have used some written sources.

Whatever we conclude about Theodoricus’s sources, he is clearly a writer concerned with evidence. He wants his history to be based on *auctoritas*. By this term he means trustworthy evidence, preferably by eyewitnesses, as usual among medieval—as well as later—historical writers.<sup>37</sup> As a learned cleric, he probably also meant statements by trustworthy and high-ranking people, preferably in writing. The reference to St. Jerome may be significant, as the kind of authority Theodoricus normally trusts: a saint, a learned theologian and a classical scholar. Similar authorities are prominent throughout his work, in his numerous digressions and quotations from Christian as well as pagan classical authors. By contrast, Icelanders of the contemporary or previous generation can hardly claim the status of *auctoritates*, although the lack of better sources makes them indispensable. In this respect, Theodoricus conforms to the author of *The King’s Mirror* later, who states that the wisest man is the one who has his knowledge from books.<sup>38</sup> Although it is not clear to what extent he also used oral sources, there is no doubt that he regarded them as inferior to written ones.

This attitude also affects the content of his work. His narrative is mostly brief and dry and contains few of the vivid and colorful stories to be found in the vernacular sagas. Nevertheless, he shows that he knew many of them, but chose not to include them. The reason for this was partly his interests; he was not interested in external events but in their inner meaning. He wanted to trace God’s finger in history and to show the relationship between the history of Norway and the universal history of salvation, which he achieved through a series of digressions, showing the typological connection between the two series of events.<sup>39</sup> Without in any way anticipating modern source criticism, he may also have omitted a number of details because he found the oral sources unreliable. An example of this is his account of the death of St. Óláfr at Stiklestad, where he mentions the existence of various versions but refuses to refer them in detail.<sup>40</sup> His ambition was to be an *auctor* with *auctoritas*, not to amuse his readers with stories of doubtful trustworthiness.

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<sup>37</sup> Guenée, *Histoire* (see note 34), 77–78.

<sup>38</sup> *Konungs skuggsiá*, ed. Ludvig Holm-Olsen (Oslo: Dybwad, 1945), 75.

<sup>39</sup> Bagge, “Theodoricus” (see note 29), 117–23.

<sup>40</sup> “Quis ei manus intulerit, utrum unum an plura vulnera habuerit, quia a diversis diversa dicantur, nos nil temere affirmare volumus nec officio mendacio aliorum aures demulcere.” Theodoricus, *Historia* (see note 30), 3.

Turning from Theodoricus to the greatest of the vernacular saga writers, the Icelander Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), we are in another world. Snorri was one of the most powerful Icelandic chieftains in the 1220s and 1230s and also had good connection to Norway, but was eventually killed by one of his enemies, partly at King Hákon IV's orders. Snorri was the author of *The Younger Edda*, a handbook in skaldic poetry with extensive information about the pagan mythology and in all likelihood also of *The Separate Saga of St Óláfr* (ca. 1225) and *Heimskringla* (ca. 1230), a history of the Norwegian kings from the earliest times until the Battle of Re in 1177, which also includes the previous work in a slightly different form. Snorri is a great story-teller, and his historical works still able to entertain a modern audience. Snorri's work contains a great number of stories which modern scholars reject as fictional and which Theodoricus deliberately may have omitted. Nevertheless, Snorri is also concerned with historical truth, and even in his preface presents a detailed discussion of the reliability of his sources for the earliest period.<sup>41</sup> He distinguishes among three categories of sources. The first of these is old poems which are used for entertainment. Snorri does not know whether they are true, but old and wise men have believed in them, which probably means that Snorri is also willing to do so, although without being quite certain. The second category, skaldic poems, is a highly tendentious source; skalds are not there to tell the truth, but to praise the person who is the subject of their poetry. Nevertheless, their exact information about movements and battles is trustworthy, because it would be a shame for a man to have been credited with deeds he had not performed. Moreover, the complicated meter of these poems makes it likely that they have been transmitted without change in the oral tradition. Finally, the third category is oral tradition going directly back to the accounts of eyewitnesses. Here Snorri points to his predecessor Ari the Wise (1068–1148) who had access to information from people who lived by the end of the tenth century.

In one respect, Snorri here represents the same intellectual culture as Theodoricus. He is not part of a living tradition which he takes for granted; he regards it from a distance, asking what can be trusted and what not. However, the difference between oral and written information is of little concern to him. The lack of written sources for the earliest period does not prevent him from including this period in his work, and his whole discussion is about oral

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<sup>41</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1893–1900), I: 3–8; *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*, trans. with intr. L. M. Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 3–5. Cf. also Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 25–32 with reference for the following.

sources. Snorri does not simply accept Ari's text as an authoritative source, but explains his trustworthiness by reference to his oral sources. The people to whom he refers are not presented as people of particularly high status, but as old and *vittr*, which in this context probably means people with long experience and much knowledge about people and events, not members of the learned elite. The skaldic poems are also oral evidence, although, as Snorri points out, with some of the same characteristics as written sources, namely that they are not exposed to change. This, however, is a practical consideration, which has nothing to do with the higher status of written texts in medieval culture. In both cases, Snorri's logic is similar to the one on which legal evidence is based in the Old Norse oral culture, namely oral transmission through witnesses who could guarantee that the original evidence survived intact, as in the case of Ari's informants. Although there was no legal parallel to skaldic poetry, the importance of preserving the exact wording was similar, while the laws also contain certain passages with rhythm and/or alliteration, which may have originated in an oral culture and served as aids of memory.

The most remarkable aspect of Snorri's reasoning about his sources is his comment about how to make use of the skaldic poems without succumbing to their bias. Snorri here introduces the principle, also found in modern handbooks on source criticism, about information that could be controlled by the audience. Modern scholars have not always been convinced by Snorri's reasoning here. Would contemporary princes and chieftains really feel insulted by being praised for deeds they had not performed? Personally, I am inclined to accept Snorri's reasoning, not as a universal rule, but as a rule applying to the society we meet in the sagas. Kings and chieftains in this society lacked the authority and the monopoly on information that would have enabled them to take the credit for deeds they had not performed. In a competitive society, where ridicule was a weapon frequently used, such behavior would have brought them laughter and scorn.

Snorri certainly belonged to the intellectual elite of his age, but was nevertheless closer to the traditional oral culture than a cleric like Theodoricus, and at least partly developed his critical principles from this cultural background. Nevertheless, he is closer to the contemporary literate culture than has appeared so far. Characteristically, he discusses his critical principles in connection with the earliest period he deals with; there are no examples in the prologue of events having taken place after the year 1000, more than 200 years before Snorri wrote. The reason for this is probably that he had written sources for this period, many of which are still extant. Occasionally, he makes some comments on the evidence in other passages—in addition to quoting skaldic poems throughout his work—but he very rarely mentions his predecessors'

texts. Most probably, he regarded most of the information about concrete events given in these texts as trustworthy, and only omitted what he found less relevant to his purpose and made changes in order to give better explanations or clearer links between individual episodes.

Returning to Theodoricus, we note that he also mentions skaldic poetry, although without commenting on the critical problems involved. Has he actually used this source, or has he taken his information from a predecessor, either Ari or his older contemporary Sæmundr? Has one or both of these formulated similar principles as Snorri on the use of skaldic poetry? We do not know. The difference between Theodoricus and Snorri regarding oral and written sources may have been less than implied above, but the former's insistence on *scriptorum auctoritas* nevertheless shows the difference between them. This becomes particularly clear regarding the period before Haraldr Fairhair, which Snorri includes in his work, referring to the ancient poems which old and wise men have accepted as true, but which Theodoricus apparently rejects. Admittedly, we do not know whether Theodoricus was familiar with *Ynglingatal*, Snorri's main source for his prehistory, although his explicit denial of the existence of a dynasty before Haraldr may suggest that he did, but did not believe in it: "But because it is known that no legitimate succession of a royal line has existed in this country ...".<sup>42</sup> To Theodoricus, pagan skalds and old and wise men in local society lacked *auctoritas*, which is only to be found in the Latin and Christian intellectual tradition.

## Conclusion: Fist, Scepter, and the Two Cultures of Medieval Europe

The transition from fist to scepter discussed in the previous pages forms part of the Europeanization of the north in the Middle Ages. As lovers of peace and order, we may approve of this development, while we may deplore it in our capacity as democrats and believers in the equality of human beings. From an intellectual point of view, we may recognize the enormous importance of the introduction of script, book culture and the heritage of the Twelfth Century Renaissance and the European universities, while rejecting the belief in authority characteristic of this culture. Most of us will also prefer Snorri's vivid narrative to Theodoricus' terse statements and religious speculations. We may also note

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<sup>42</sup> "Sed quia constat nullam ratam regalis stemmatis successionem in hac terra extitisse ...," Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. Jónsson (see note 41); Theodoricus, *Historia* (see note 30), 3.

that the change was not complete, not even on the official level with which most of our sources are concerned and probably less among the common people. Although the social inequality had increased during the High Middle Ages, it was still less than in most European countries. The king largely ruled by consent and negotiation, despite his almost divine status in the official ideology. While the law was based on the *auctoritas* of the king and his experts, learned in Roman and canon law, it still included a number of traditional rules and was applied with the consent of popular representatives. And finally, when learned clerics like Theodoricus tried to base their history as much as possible on learned *auctoritates*, the Icclander Snorri Sturluson combined European and local traditions in a way that came closer to anticipate modern source criticism than any of his European contemporaries did.





Cristian Bratu

# “Je, aucteur de ce livre”: Authorial Persona and Authority in French Medieval Histories and Chronicles

## Introduction: From *Auctoritas* to *Autorité*

The early history of the concept of *auctoritas* is steeped in the legal and political context of the Roman state. This notion is indeed closely related to that of *auctor*, that is to say the person who gives his assent (*auctoritatem suam interponit*) or uses his legal and moral weight to validate a transaction or a law by declaring “*auctor fio*” (“I approve”).

In general terms, *auctoritas* referred to the senators’ moral authority, which was based on their experience, wisdom, learning, prestige, and influence. In the political realm, *auctoritas* was the attribute of the patricians, and later of the senators (*auctoritas patrum*),<sup>1</sup> whereas in the private realm, the main authority rested with the *pater familias*. In contrast, *potestas* or *imperium* represented power in the sense of jurisdictional or executive authority, and belonged to the magistrates and the people. These two concepts were interdependent, as *auctoritas* would have been void of substance without the concrete application through *potestas*, while *potestas* would have been illegitimate without *auctoritas*.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, *auctoritas* also referred to the decrees of the Senate,<sup>3</sup> the right of possession,<sup>4</sup> the guarantee establishing the veracity of an assertion, as well as to

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<sup>1</sup> As the *auctoritas patrum* or senatorial consent was required for elections and certain legislative acts, there are numerous occurrences in both legal and historical texts of the phrase *si patres auctores fiunt/fierent*, meaning “if the senators approve,” as in Livy, *History of Rome: Books I and II*, ed. B. O. Foster. Loeb Classical Library, 114 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1919), I § 17, 62.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the relationship between *auctoritas* and *potestas*, see Jesús Fueyo, “Die Idee der ‘auctoritas’: Genesis und Entwicklung,” *Epirrhosis: Festgabe für Carl Schmitt*, ed. Hans Barion et al., 2 vols. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1968), I, 213–35; see also Rafael Domingo, *Auctoritas* (Barcelona: Ed. Ariel, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. Tullius Cicero, *De Legibus*, ed. Georges de Plinval. Collection des Universités de France (Paris: Belles Lettres. 1959), 2 § 15, 37.

<sup>4</sup> In the laws of the XII Tables we find the phrase “*ADVERSVS. HOSTEM. AETERNA. AVCTORITAS*,” that is to say that a stranger could never have the right to possess the property of a Roman.

documents or persons that could support a certain claim. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to limit the concepts of *auctoritas* and *auctor* strictly to their legal meanings. After all, the central axis around which revolves the idea of *auctoritas* is the notion of credibility, which has applicability in numerous fields other than law and politics. Thus, *auctoritas* is also a trustworthy, authoritative opinion,<sup>5</sup> the weight or importance of an idea,<sup>6</sup> as well as a model or an example.<sup>7</sup>

In the Christian Middle Ages, the notion of *auctoritas* was preserved and transformed at the same time. The supreme *auctoritas* now belonged to God, while the authority of earthly institutions was relevant only insofar as they attempted to fulfill the tasks prescribed by divinity. Augustine (354–430), for instance, distinguished between the two forms of authority while emphasizing the preeminence of the divine *auctoritas*.<sup>8</sup> Naturally, of all human institutions, the Church was believed to have the most *auctoritas*, while *potestas* was normally reserved to civil and political institutions.<sup>9</sup> Ancient *auctores*

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5 Cicero says that he is more inclined to give more weight to old-time views: “plus apud me antiquorum auctoritas valet,” *De Senectute; De Amicitia; De Divinatione*, ed. W. A. Falconer. Loeb Classical Library, 154 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1923) 4 § 13, 123.

6 In *De Oratore*: “it seems to me that the small book of the Twelve Tables surpasses in importance the libraries of all the philosophers” (“bibliothecas omnium philosophorum mihi videtur XII. tabularum libellus auctoritatis pondere superare”), *De Oratore. Books I-II*, ed. E. W. Sutton. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1942), 1 § 44, 1363–67.

7 Cicero again: “His example was effective” or “had a considerable influence” (“valuit auctoritas”), *Tusculanae Disputationes*, ed. M. Pohlenz. Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: Teubner, 1918), 2 § 22, 53.

8 “Auctoritas autem partim divina est, partim humana: sed vera, firma, summa ea est quae divina nominator,” *De Ordine*, ed. W. M. Green. Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 29 (Turhout: Brepols, 1970), 2.9.27, 122. For the concept of *auctoritas* in Augustine’s work, see Karl-Heinrich Lütcke, “*Auctoritas*” bei Augustin. Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft, 44 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1968). See also Sean Otto’s article “Predestination and the Two Cities: The Authority of Augustine and the Nature of the Church in Giles of Rome and John Wyclif” in this volume.

9 On Pope Gelasius I’s distinction between spiritual *auctoritas* and earthly *potestas*, see Robert Benson, “The Gelasian Doctrine: Uses and Transformations,” *La notion d’autorité au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident: Colloques internationaux de La Napoule, session des 23–26 octobre 1978*, ed. George Makdisi et al. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), 13–44; see also James Muldoon, “Auctoritas, Potestas and World Order,” *Plenitude of Power: The Doctrines and Exercise of Authority in the Middle Ages. Essays in Memory of Robert Louis Benson*, ed. Robert C. Figueira (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 125–39. On the authority of the Church and authority within the Church, see also in this volume Jill Bradley, “Adapting Authority: The Harrowing of Hell on Two Romanesque Baptismal Fonts,” Sini Kangas, “A Great Stirring of Hearts or Papal Inspira-

continued to be admired during the Middle Ages, although their credibility was deemed inferior to the authority of the Bible.<sup>10</sup> After all, God was not just the supreme authority in the world but also the very creator (*auctor*) of the world.<sup>11</sup> Vernacular languages, too, adopted the idea of God as author of the world; in French vernacular, there are countless examples of God mentioned as *actour*, *actor* or *auteur*. Christine of Pizan (1363–ca. 1430), for instance, speaks of “our creator, God, father and author of everything”<sup>12</sup> and as “infinite wisdom and creator of all things.”<sup>13</sup>

As suggested earlier, although classical authors were surpassed by the authority of the Bible, they did nevertheless maintain their prestige. Greek writers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Epictetus were translated into Latin and became *auctoritates*, next to Roman writers such as Cato, Caesar, Cicero, Sallust, Livy, Virgil, Quintilian, Seneca, and others.<sup>14</sup> As A. J. Minnis correctly

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tion? Contesting Popular Authority in the Preaching of the First Crusade”; and Robin Sutherland-Harris, “Authority, Text, and Genre in Accounts of Diocesan Struggle: The Bishops of Bath and Glastonbury and the Uses of Cartulary Evidence.”

**10** On the authority of the Bible, see A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. Middle Ages Series (London: Scholar Press, 1984; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 33–39.

**11** The idea of God as creator is omnipresent in the Bible: *creator* in Eccl. 12:1, Rom. 1:25, 1 Petr. 4 19; *creator omnipotens* in Eccl. 1:8; *creator omnium* in Eccl. 24:12, 2 Mac. 1:24; *mundi creator* in 2 Mac 7:23; *auctor vitae* in Acts 3:15; *auctor salutis* in Heb. 2:10; *auctor fidei* in Heb 12:2. I have used the Versio Vulgata edition of the Bible here.

**12** “Nostre createur, Dieu, le pere de tout acteur,” *Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*, ed. Suzanne Solente, 4 vols. Publications de la Société des Anciens Textes Français, 85 (Paris: A. et J. Picard, 1959–1966), II, v. 9010, 183.

**13** “Dieu, sapience / infinie, acteur de toute fourme,” Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, ed. Suzanne Solente, 2 vols. Société de l’histoire de France, Série antérieure à 1789, 437 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1936–1940), I, 32. In Guillaume of Machaut’s *Prise d’Alexandrie*, too, God is mentioned as “creatour, / Qui de tout le monde est actour,” “creator and author of the whole world.” Cf. *Prise d’Alexandrie ou Chronique du roi Pierre I<sup>er</sup> de Lusignan*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie. Publications de la Société de l’Orient latin. Série historique, 1 (Geneva: J.-G. Fick, 1877), vv. 7670–71, 237. In the anonymous *Livre des fais du bon messire Jehan le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut*, he is named “author of all things” (“acteur de toutes choses”), cf. ed. Denis Lalande. Textes Littéraires Français, 331 (Geneva: Droz, 1985), 397. Such examples appear not only in French, for Dante, too, refers to God as the “true author” (“verace autore”) in the *Paradiso* (chant XXVI, v. 40), *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, ed. Giovanni Federzoni, 3 vols. (Bologna: L. Cappelli, 1919–1923), vol. 3, 447.

**14** On the use and abuse of ancient authors during and after the Middle Ages, see Csaba Németh’s article “Fabricating Philosophical Authority in the Twelfth Century: The *Liber egerimion* and the *De septem septenis*” in this volume, as well as *Les autorités: dynamiques et mutations d’une figure de référence à l’antiquité*, ed. Didier Foucault and Pascal Payen. Collection Horos (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2007).

points out, “[i]n a literary context, the term *auctor* denoted someone who was at once a writer and an authority, someone not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed.”<sup>15</sup> In French vernacular too, the words *acteur*, *actour*, *aucteur* or *auctour* usually referred to famous *auctores*. In Christine of Pizan’s *Livre de la paix*, the word *aucteur* appears next to Seneca’s name.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the word *auctorité* often meant the same thing as *auteur* or referred to a quotation from a famous author. In the *Livre de la Paix*, for example, after quoting several Latin authors, Christine of Pizan always refers back to them as “the Latin authority mentioned above.”<sup>17</sup> There is thus a conflation between the idea of authority and authoritative writers, and that is why in this essay, I will sometimes use the words “author” and “authority” interchangeably as well.

One may legitimately wonder how the status of *auctor* was acquired or bestowed upon a certain writer. Once again, Minnis is right to argue that the main criteria were the intrinsic worth of a writer’s work, as well as its authenticity (in an age when forgeries abounded, that issue was particularly relevant). But if the authenticity criterion is easy to accept, the intrinsic worth of a text may be seen as subjective; one’s “author” may be another’s “amateur” and vice versa. Another informal criterion was the age (*antiquitas* or *vetustas*) of the document. The older the document, the more authoritative it was considered.<sup>18</sup>

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15 A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (see note 10), 10; see also Marie-Dominique Chenu, “Auctor, Actor, Autor,” *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi. Bulletin Du Cange* 3 (1927): 81–86.

16 Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de la Paix*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard (The Hague: Mouton, 1958), 175. See also the English translation: *The Book of Peace*, ed. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008). For other references to the word *aucteur* in the *Livre de la Paix*, see pages 100, 106, 165, and 170; in the *Livre des fais de Charles V* (see note 13) see I, 189, and in the *Livre de mutacion de fortune* (see note 12), II, 15, 18, 72, 81, 119, 143, 144, and III, 187. For references in the works of other French medieval writers, see Adolf Tobler and Erhard Lommatzsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch: Adolf Toblers Nachgelassene Materialien*, 7 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1915–1952), I, 688, and the online *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330–1500)* of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique & Université de Nancy at: [www.atilf.fr/dmf](http://www.atilf.fr/dmf) (last accessed on June 20, 2012).

17 “L’auctorité cy dessus en latin,” *Le Livre de la Paix* (see note 16), 69, 73, 79, 97, 130, 138; see also the entries on “auctorité” in the *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch* (see note 16), 689; *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* (see note 16).

18 Thus, older writers were always considered to be better than contemporary ones. For instance, Walter Map’s contemporaries doubted that he had actually written his own works, due to their high quality. As a result, Map concluded cynically: “My only fault is that I am alive. I have no intention, however, of correcting this fault by my death,” Gautier Map, *De nugis curialium*, ed. M. R. James. *Medieval and Modern Series*, xiv (Oxford: Anecdota Oxoniensia, 1914), IV § 5, 158. See also Maijastina Kahlos’ article “But Our Customs are Older”: The Authority of Antiquity in Late Antique Debates” in this volume.

The size of the readership of a writer's work, together with the copying of his work in medieval schools and scriptoria also played an important part in his consecration as *auctoritas*.

Even so, these criteria still seem incomplete and cannot explain the popularity of a writer and the relative lack of success of another. Minnis is ultimately right to contend that “[t]he thinking we are investigating seems to be circular: the work of an *auctor* was a book worth reading; a book worth reading had to be the work of an *auctor*.”<sup>19</sup> Yet the absence of very definite criteria for the title of *auctoritas* had the distinct advantage of preventing the ossification of the system, while allowing newcomers to join in as time passed. As Minnis compellingly argues, it is the very incompleteness and porousness of the criteria for *auctoritas* that made possible the emergence of vernacular “*auctorités*” towards the end of the medieval period.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, together with antiquity, writing in Latin ceased to be a criterion for authoritative writing during the autumn of the Middle Ages. In the French-speaking realm, vernacular writers became increasingly recognized from the fourteenth century on. As we will see shortly, even non-fiction writers, such as historians and chroniclers, started knocking at the door of the Pantheon of French letters.

## How to Become an *Autorité*: The French Historians' Strategies of Authority

Like most other historians, French medieval historians needed to use a number of strategies in order to establish themselves as credible recorders of times past. Much has been written on the authorizing strategies utilized by ancient and medieval historians, but it would be useful to mention here at least some of them.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (see note 10), 12.

<sup>20</sup> Jan Ziolkowski, too, is right to suggest that “medieval *auctoritas* is a vast edifice that was constructed year by year, century by century, by the cooperation and interaction of texts and readers. Like many Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals, its basic structure remained fairly constant for long stretches of time, but its fine points were redesigned to meet new demands from new users.” Jan Ziolkowski, “Cultures of Authority in the Long Twelfth Century,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108 (2009): 421–48; here 423.

<sup>21</sup> There is an impressive bibliography on the idea of authority. I have selected here just a few titles that are relevant for our discussion: *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover, NH, and London: University Press

One of the strongest arguments that historians could bring in their favor was their status as eyewitness.<sup>22</sup> In medieval France, eyewitness accounts become increasingly popular from the twelfth century on, that is to say the time of the first crusades. The anonymous *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum* was written by an eyewitness to the First Crusade, while the *Historia Hierosolymitana* by Baudri of Bourgueil (ca. 1050–1130) and Guibert of Nogent's (1053–ca. 1124) *Gesta Dei per Francos* were based largely on eyewitness reports. The Second Crusade constituted the main topic of *De profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, written by Odo of Deuil (1110–1162) around 1146 and of Raoul the Priest's *De expugnatione Lyxbonensi* (1147).

The first major prose historians in French vernacular, Geoffrey of Villehardouin (1160–ca. 1212) and Robert of Clari (1170–1216), were two thirteenth-century aristocrats whose strength lay not in their literary style but in their status as eyewitnesses to—and participants in—the Fourth Crusade, which they both emphasize quite frequently in their texts. In his chronicle of the conquest of Constantinople, Villehardouin declares solemnly that he was present at all the councils of the Fourth Crusade.<sup>23</sup> Robert of Clari mentions his eyewitness status in the last paragraph of his chronicle, where he portrays himself as a chronicler “who saw and heard” all the events that he wrote

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of New England Dartmouth College, 1989); Gérard Leclerc, *Histoire de l'autorité: L'assignation des énoncés culturels et la généalogie de la croyance* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996); John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3–12; *Auctoritas: Authorship and Authority*, ed. Catherine Emerson, Edward A. O'Brien, and Laurent Semichon (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2001); *Auctor et auctoritas: invention et conformisme dans l'écriture médiévale: Actes du colloque tenu à l'Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, 14–16 juin 1999*, ed. Michel Zimmermann (Paris: Ecole des Chartes, 2001). See also the introduction and article of Albrecht Classen in this book.

**22** The authority of eyewitness accounts and of historians who obtained their information from eyewitnesses has been recognized since antiquity. For example, Odysseus congratulates Demodocus for his storytelling abilities by saying, “well and truly do you sing of the fate of the Achaeans, all that they did and suffered, and all the toils they endured, as perhaps one who had yourself been present” (“Ἀλὶν γὰρ κατὰ κόσμον Ἀχαιῶν οἶτον αἰεῖδεις, / ὅσσ' ἔρξαν τ' ἔπαθόν τε καὶ ὅσσ' ἐμόγησαν Ἀχαιοί, / ὥς τέ που ἦ αὐτὸς παρεών ἢ ἄλλου ἀκούσας”), in Homer, *Odyssey*, ed. A. T. Murray and G. E. Dimock. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), I § VIII, vv. 489–91, 307–09. In his *Histories*, Herodotus says that he travelled himself to Elephantine and “saw things with [his] very own eyes,” *Histories*, ed. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), II § 29, 105.

**23** “Qui a touz les conseuls fu,” Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Jean Dufourmet (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), § 120, 98. See also Peter Noble, “Eyewitnesses of the Fourth Crusade: The War against Alexius III,” *Reading Medieval Studies* 25 (1999): 75–89.

about in the chronicle.<sup>24</sup> A contemporary of Villehardouin and Clari's, Henri de Valenciennes (ca. 1170–ca. 1230) emphasizes his eyewitness status by declaring that he saw all the deeds and councils of the great men and barons “with his own eyes.”<sup>25</sup>

Most of these formulae relating to seeing and hearing the events narrated appear either in the prologue or the epilogue, which are, like in the works of classical writers, the major *loci* of authorial self-expression.<sup>26</sup> It is usually here that writers can, for instance, invoke God, the supreme authority of the Christian Middle Ages, such as Joinville in the “second prologue” to his *Vie de Saint Louis*:

In the name of God Almighty, I, Jean, Lord of Joinville, Seneschal of Champagne, dictate the life of our good King, Saint Louis, in which I shall record what I saw and heard both in the course of the six years in which I was on pilgrimage in his company oversea, and after we returned to France.<sup>27</sup>

The prologue can also include references to the patron, who is usually a crowned head or an important aristocrat who, by his or her very rank, can confer—social and political rather than intellectual—*auctoritas* to the work in question. For example, in the first prologue to the *Vie de Saint Louis*, Joinville dedicates the

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24 “Qui le vit et qui l’oï,” Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Jean Dufournet. Moyen Âge, 14 (Paris: Champion, 2004), § CXX, 212. All the translations from Robert of Clari, Philip of Novara, Jean Froissart, Christine de Pizan, Georges Chastellain, Philippe de Commines, and Olivier de la Marche are mine. The italics within the translated passages are also mine.

25 “Car Henris vit oell à oell toz les faiz qui là furent, et sot toz les consauz des haus homes et des barons,” Henri de Valenciennes, *La Conquête de Constantinople, avec la continuation de Henri de Valenciennes*, ed. M. Natalis de Wailly (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1882), § 1, 304.

26 Many classical authors prefaced their work with considerations on the reason why they set out to write or dictate their story. Such is the case with Thucydides, Cato in the prologue to his *Origines*, Sallust in his *Catiline*, Livy in his *History of Rome*, to quote just a few. See also Tore Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions*. Studia Latina Stockholmensia (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell, 1964); Peter Damian-Grint, “Prologues and Epilogues,” id., *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Authorising History in the Vernacular Revolution* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), 87–142; *Seuils de l’œuvre dans le texte médiéval*, ed. Emmanuèle Baumgartner (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2002).

27 “En nom de Dieu le tout puissant, je, Jehan, sire de Joynville, seneschal de Champaigne, faiz escrire la vie de nostre saint roy Looÿs, ce que je vi et oÿ par l’espace de six ans que je fu en sa compaignie ou pelerinage d’outre mer, et puis que nous revenimes,” Jean Joinville, *La vie de Saint Louis*, ed. Jacques Monfrin. Classiques Garnier (Paris: Garnier, 1995), § 19, 152; Joinville and Villehardouin, *Joinville and Villehardouin: Chronicles of the Crusades*, ed. Margaret R. B. Shaw (London: Penguin, 1963), 167.



text “to his good lord Louis, son of the King of France, and by the grace of God, King of Navarre and Count Palatine of Champagne and Brie.”<sup>28</sup>

As Christiane Marchello-Nizia points out, the prologues of French historical texts become relatively standardized from the fourteenth century on.<sup>29</sup> Joinville’s text provides us with an excellent example of this new type of prologue, which usually contains a reference to God and the patron of the work (the heavenly and the earthly *auctoritates*), the name of the author, his social rank, and various formulae that refer to the writing (or the dictation) of the text and ascertain its veracity. Most late medieval historians, from Jean Froissart (1337–1405) to Georges Chastellain (ca. 1405 or 1415–1475) and Jean Molinet (1435–1507), opened their works with such formulae, which had a nearly juridical solemnity, as historians essentially swore to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

Finally, references to books, predecessors or authors who influenced the medieval historian’s own work constituted an important authorizing strategy as well. Very often, historians admitted that they drew inspiration from other books but without naming them. Such is the case with the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman historian Wace, who quotes an unknown book at the beginning of his *Roman de Brut* (“As the book relates”), and with Villehardouin, who quotes an unidentified book (“as the book bears witness”) in his *Conquest of Constantinople*.<sup>30</sup>

Other historians, however, chose to name their sources. Jean Froissart, for instance, writes that he is continuing the work of his illustrious predecessor Jean le Bel.<sup>31</sup> Christine of Pizan’s *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* is not just an homage to the French king, as the title indicates. The book is also, as are most of Christine’s works, an homage paid to the wise men (*sapiens*) and the *auctores* (*auteurs*) of the ancient and medieval world, who are quoted abundantly in the *Livre des fais* (Aristotle, Plato, Socrates,

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28 “A son bon seigneur Looÿs, filz du roy de France, par la grace de Dieu roy de Navarre, de Champaigne et de Brie conte palazin,” § 1, 143. Joinville and Villehardouin, *Joinville and Villehardouin: Chronicles of the Crusades* (see note 27), 163.

29 Christiane Marchello-Nizia, “L’historien et son prologue: Forme littéraire et stratégies discursives,” *La Chronique et l’histoire au Moyen Age. Colloque des 24 et 25 mai 1982*, ed. Daniel Poirion. Cultures et Civilisations Médiévales, 2 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne, 1986), 13–25; here 17.

30 “Si cum li livres le devise,” Wace, *Wace’s Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, ed. Judith Weiss (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), v. 9, 3; “Et bien tesmoigne li livres,” Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople* (see note 23), § 236, 162.

31 Jean Froissart, *Chroniques: Livre I (première partie, 1325–1350) et Livre II*, ed. George T. Diller and Peter F. Ainsworth (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2001), prologue, 71.



Virgil, Ovid, Valerius Maximus, Avicenna, to name just a few).<sup>32</sup> In his *Mémoires*, Olivier of la Marche (1425–1502) writes that he could never equal the style of a Chastellain or Jean Molinet. Nevertheless, he drew inspiration from other authors, such as Orosius, Tacitus, and Socrates.<sup>33</sup>

But in spite of the omnipresence of such strategies in French historical texts, most vernacular historians would never have dared present themselves as *auctoritates* or *auctores*. Until the fourteenth century, this term was reserved by and large to refer to ancient authors or powerful political leaders. Most vernacular writers seem content to establish their authority through the strategies mentioned above, without claiming the title of “auteur.” As I will argue shortly, the fourteenth century brought about radical changes in the rapport between vernacular writers and authority.

## Authority, Authorial *Personae*, and *Auteurs* in Medieval France

The proof that things are as the historian says they are depended not a little on the audience’s perception of the narrator’s character: to believe an historical account, it was necessary to believe the historian himself.<sup>34</sup>

Although John Marincola’s quote refers to ancient historians, it is perfectly valid for all historians. The very persona of the historian is in itself a crucial strategy of authority, which has been somewhat neglected in discussions of *auctoritas* (Marincola’s work being a notable exception in that respect).

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<sup>32</sup> In Christine de Pizan, *Livre des fais de Charles V* (see note 13), see I, 194, and II, 30, 31, 33, 35, 162, 178 for Aristotle; II, 163, for Seneca; II, 18, 176, for Ovid; II, 15, 17, for Avicenna, etc. See also Bernard Ribémont, “Christine de Pizan et l’encyclopédisme scientifique,” *City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina De Rentiis. European Cultures: Studies in Literature and the Arts, 2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 174–85; Nadia Margolis, “Christine de Pizan, *mangeuse de savoir*,” *L’Offrande du Cœur: Medieval and Early Modern Studies in Honour of Glynnis Cropp*, ed. Margaret Burrell and Judith Grant (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2004), 45–60.

<sup>33</sup> Olivier de la Marche, *Mémoires d’Olivier de la Marche*, ed. Henri Beaune and J. d’Arbaumont, 4 vols. (Paris: Renouard, 1883–1888), vol. 1, prologue, 14–15; préface, 183–184. Due to space constraints, this list of strategies of authority is bound to be incomplete. A more complete list would also include the use of the genre of chronicles, histories, and annals, each with its respective advantages, the use of prose, the incorporation of authentic documents such as letters into the text, and so on.

<sup>34</sup> Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (see note 21), 6.

In the context of the Middle Ages, the relationship between authority and the writers' *personae* has received less critical attention for several reasons.<sup>35</sup> It has been argued (quite correctly) that the fundamentally Christian culture of the medieval period placed a premium on *humilitas* and that the medieval idea of authority often consisted of imitating ancient authors. Let us remember that Huguccio of Pisa (d. 1210) defined *auctoritas* as a *sententia digna imitatione; mutatis mutandis*, an *auctor* was a writer who was deemed *dignus imitatione*. Furthermore, the numerous annals, chronicles, and histories produced for corporate patrons (cities, abbeys and other religious institutions, sometimes royal and princely courts) were anonymous because the emphasis was on the subject matter, whereas the historian or the scribe was perceived as a mere tool for the production of the text. Even so, this culture of intellectual modesty and anonymity should not blind us to the attempts that medieval writers made in order to become authoritative themselves.

For instance, the very presence of the historian's name in the text was a powerful way to establish authority because the signature could distinguish between an authentic and an apocryphal text.<sup>36</sup> By writing down his name, the author implicitly admitted that his very reputation (*nomen*, *fama* or *auctoritas*) was at stake. *A fortiori*, by creating a more elaborate authorial persona for themselves, historians implied that they were personally vouching for the truthfulness of their narrative. Unlike most modern historians, medieval writers of chronicles and histories were not willing to simply let the

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<sup>35</sup> However, there are several important studies that focus on authorial *personae* but not always in conjunction with the idea of authority: Anne Berthelot, *Figures et fonction de l'écrivain au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Montréal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1991); *Figures de l'écrivain au Moyen Âge: Actes du colloque du Centre d'études médiévales de l'Université de Picardie, Amiens, 18–20 mars 1988*, ed. Danielle Buschinger. Göppingen Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 510 (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1991); Sophie Marnette, *Narrateur et points de vue dans la littérature française médiévale: Une approche linguistique* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998); *Identités d'auteur dans l'Antiquité et la tradition européenne*, ed. Claude Calame and Roger Chartier (Grenoble: Millon, 2004); *The Medieval Author in Medieval French Literature*, ed. Virginie Greene (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); see also my own entry "Authorship," *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, ed. Graeme Dunphy, 2 vols. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), I, 133–36. For a more extensive analysis of the authorial *personae* of French medieval historians approached from a different angle, see my book chapter "Clerc, Chevalier, Auteur: The Authorial Personae of French Medieval Historians (12th–15th c.)," *Authority and Gender in Medieval and Renaissance Chronicles*, ed. Juliana Dresvina and Nicholas Sparks (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 231–59. The present essay is in fact a deepening of the reflection on the relationship between authorial persona and authority that I had started in "Clerc, Chevalier, Auteur."

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bernard Guenée, *Du Guesclin et Froissart: La fabrication de la renommée* (Paris: Tallandier, 2008), 129.

cold hard evidence speak for itself. In medieval texts, the author figure is constantly there engaging the readers or the listeners by presenting their (often very biased) opinion about certain events or persons, reminding them about events narrated earlier or that will be mentioned later, and asking them to listen carefully.<sup>37</sup> Joyce Coleman was right to argue that many chronicles were meant primarily to be performed in front of an audience, rather than read silently in the peace and quiet of one's abode.<sup>38</sup> Whereas modern historians tend to address a readership that expects to be convinced through material evidence, conclusive documents, and an imposing critical apparatus, most medieval historians seem to picture themselves as orators in front of an audience whom they have to address constantly in order to convince them of the veracity of the story.<sup>39</sup> This explains in part why the authorial persona is so important in the ancient world as well as in the Middle Ages.

Moreover, most of the strategies of authority mentioned in the previous section involve the persona of medieval historians in one way or another. For instance, when historians emphasize their status as eyewitness, the representation of the eyewitness is part of the larger persona of the historian that frames and legitimizes the narrative. When historians solemnly swear to narrate the events as accurately as possible or when they mention other authors who inspired them, they strike a pose which is also part of their multifaceted authorial persona.

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37 All French medieval texts, whether from the twelfth or the fifteenth century, are replete with formulae that refer to hearing or speaking, such as: “ore avés oï,” (“as you have heard”), Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople* (see note 24), § XXIX, 212; or “vous dirai je” (“I will tell you”), Joinville, *La vie de Saint Louis* (see note 27), § 669, 546.

38 Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

39 The bibliography on the “oral” nature of medieval texts being far too ample to be listed here, I will cite just a few major critical works: Paul Zumthor, *La Poésie et la voix dans la civilisation médiévale*. Essais et conférences (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), and id., *La Lettre et la voix de la “littérature” médiévale*. Poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1987); *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. Alger Doane and Carol Pasternack (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); D. H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800–1300* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); *Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. F. H. Nicolaisen. Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies Series, 112 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1995); *Performing Medieval Narrative*, ed. Evelyn B. Vitz, Nancy F. Regalado, and Marilyn Lawrence (Cambridge and Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2005); see also my article “Or vous dirai: La vocalité des récits historiques français du Moyen Âge (XIIe-XVe siècles),” *Neophilologus* 96.3 (2012): 333–47.

The authorial persona of French medieval historians is a complex unit which can be subdivided into three main components or *hypostases*:<sup>40</sup> the historian *qua* actor or character in his own story, as eyewitness, and as narrator or author. In general, historians tend to use the *passé simple* tense when portraying themselves as characters in their story. The *passé simple* describes a complete action which has a definite beginning and end in the past, and it is used by most chroniclers to describe the events that they narrate.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the *passé simple* (which corresponds to Benveniste's aorist) is used to describe the historian as a character "in action" within the diegesis. When Villehardouin describes himself as a character, it is almost always in the *passé simple*,<sup>42</sup> and later historians, be it the thirteenth-century writer Philip of Novara (1200–1270)<sup>43</sup> or the fifteenth-century memoirist Philippe of Commines (1447–1511), will do exactly the same thing.<sup>44</sup>

As narrators, historians usually address the audience mostly in the present, the *passé composé*,<sup>45</sup> and sometimes in the future.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, if the character is described almost exclusively in the past, the narrator's voice tends to emphasize his or her (fictional) presence in front of audience.<sup>47</sup>

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40 I borrow this term from ancient philosophy and theology. Early Christian scholars spoke of God's three *hypostases* or facets (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all united in one essence or *ousia*).

41 It is common for entire chronicle passages to be written almost completely in the *passé simple*, as in the following excerpt from Villehardouin's chronicle: "Et cil Fourques dont je vous di *comença* a parler de Dieu par France et par les autres pais d'entour; et sachiez que Nostre Sires *fist* maintes miracles pour lui. Sachiez que la renommee de cel saint home *ala* tant que ele *vint* a l'apostele de Rome Innocent; et l'apostoles *envoia* en France, et *manda* au preudome que il preeschast de la croiz par s'autorité", Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople* (see note 23), §§ 1–2, 40, italics mine.

42 "Josfroï de Vileharduyn li mareschauz de Champaigne *moustra* la parole par l'acord et par la volonté aus autres, et leur *dist* ...," Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople* (see note 23), § 27, 52, italics mine.

43 "Phelipe de Nevaire, quy *fu* a tous les fais et les conseils," Philippe de Novare, *Mémoires: 1218–1243*, ed. Charles Kohler (Paris: Champion, 1913), § 1, 5.

44 "Envyron ce temps, je *vins* au service du Roy," Philippe de Commines, *Mémoires*, ed. Joël Blanchard. Livre de poche, Lettres gothiques, 4564 (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2001), III § XI, 266.

45 "Le *tesmongne*, ROBERS DE CLARI, li chevaliers, et *a fait metre* en escrit le verité," Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople* (see note 24), § CXX, 212.

46 "Or vous *dirons* d'une autre aventure," Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople* (see note 24), § LXVI, 146.

47 Some historians do speak about themselves as narrators or authors in the *passé simple*. Such is the case, for instance, with Wace at the end of his *Brut* (see note 30): "*Fist* mestre Wace cest romanz," v. 14866 ("Master Wace *made* this narrative," 373). Here, it could be argued that Wace

The eyewitness is an intermediate *hypostasis* which connects the character to the narrator figure. That is probably why French historians tend to hesitate between the *passé simple* and the *passé composé* in their portrayal of themselves as eyewitnesses. As mentioned earlier, many chroniclers claim that they will write what they “saw and heard,” in the *passé simple*, whereas others say that they wrote down what they have “seen and known,” in the *passé composé*.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, each of these facets of the historian’s persona can contribute, both individually and in combination with another *hypostasis*, to create the authoritativeness that the historian is trying to achieve. In theory, each historian can choose what *hypostases* to emphasize in their text. In reality, however, knights-cum-historians such as Robert of Clari, Geoffrey of Villehardouin, Jean of Joinville (1224–1317), and Philippe de Commynes usually present themselves as eyewitnesses and characters. Historians who had a clerical background or who had a more “literary” education, such as Geoffrey Gaimar (flourished 1136–1137), Wace (1115–1183), Benoît of Sainte-Maure (d. 1173), Jean Froissart, Georges Chastellain, and Jean Molinet, tend to emphasize their *personae* as narrators and authors.<sup>49</sup>

## The Historian as Eyewitness and Character

In the previous section, I mentioned that one of the most important strategies for historians both ancient and medieval was their eyewitness status. In the case of medieval historians, the eyewitness status is often claimed in a formulaic phrase such as “I saw and heard these events” and supported by realistic details that only an eyewitness could have gathered. For instance, Clari mentions the names of the major participants in the crusade and includes descriptions of Constantinople and of the crusading armies, which only an eyewitness could

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stages himself as a character in front of an audience. However, this is an exception if we compare it to the immense number of sentences in the present, *passé composé*, and future uttered by the narrator.

**48** “Ce que je vi et oï,” Joinville, *La vie de Saint Louis* (see note 27), § 19, 152, versus “ce que j’ay sceu et congneu des faictz du roy Loys onzeiesme,” Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires* (see note 44), Prologue, 95.

**49** But as always, there are also some mixed cases, such as Henry de Valenciennes who was both a cleric and witnessed various events of the Fourth Crusade, and Joinville, who had already completed a *Credo* before writing *La vie de Saint Louis* (see note 27).

have done.<sup>50</sup> As suggested earlier, the elaboration of a substantial persona as character can also help historians back up their claim that they were indeed “there.”

Such is the case of Geoffrey of Villehardouin, whose elaborate *Selbstdarstellung* as a knight was certainly motivated by the fact that he was one of the important leaders of the crusade. As he notes in his chronicle, Villehardouin, “Marshal of Champagne,” was heavily involved in the preparations for the Fourth Crusade. As an ambassador of Thibaut of Champagne, he went to Venice to request the help of the doge Henry Dandolo (1107?–1205), and his speech in front of the Venetian grandees was allegedly so effective that the audience approved his request with tears in their eyes (§ 28). It is also Villehardouin who proposed the Marquis Boniface of Montferrat (1150–1207) as leader of the crusade (§ 41) and persuaded Louis of Blois (1172–1205) that the point of departure of the crusade should be none other than Venice (§§ 53–54). Despite Villehardouin’s lobbying efforts, it was eventually Baldwin IX of Flanders (1172–1205) who was elected emperor of Constantinople instead of Boniface of Montferrat, and it fell upon Villehardouin to mend bridges between the two leaders (§ 286). Villehardouin was also a remarkable knight, as is apparent from his valiant combat in the Byzantine capital (§ 151). Later, the knight Villehardouin commanded important military operations around Adrianople (§ 343), and then returned to Constantinople for discussions with the Venetian Doge and Henry of Flanders (1174–1216) (§ 386); he then defeated the Greeks in Demotika and even helped his distressed friend Renier of Trit (d. 1205?) (§§ 435–440). As a reward for his services, the Marquis of Montferrat bestowed a fiefdom in the Frankish Morea upon Villehardouin (§ 496), who thereafter called himself “Marshal of Champagne and Romania,” “Li marchis Josfroï de Vileharduyn le mareschal de Romenie et de Champaigne” (§ 496).<sup>51</sup>

Other historians, such as Joinville and even Froissart, also created elaborate self-portraits as characters and privileged eyewitnesses. Thus, the image of Joinville *qua* character is intriguingly omnipresent for a text that bears the title *The Life of Saint Louis*.<sup>52</sup> Naturally, Joinville attempted to show that he

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<sup>50</sup> See also Gérard Jacquin, “Robert de Clari, témoin et conteur,” *Et c’est la fin pour quoi sommes ensemble: hommage à Jean Dufournet: littérature, histoire et langue du Moyen Age*, ed. Jean-Claude Aubailly, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1993), II, 747–57.

<sup>51</sup> For more on Villehardouin as a character in his own chronicle, see Jean Dufournet, *Les Ecrivains de la IV<sup>e</sup> croisade: Villehardouin et Clari*, 2 vols. (Paris: SEDES, 1973), I, 160–74.

<sup>52</sup> On this discrepancy between the title of the book and Joinville’s ubiquitous persona, see also Michel Stanesco, “*Il ne faut oublier Joinville: du mythe collectif à l’élaboration du moi dans La*

was one of the most reliable (if not *the* most reliable) eyewitness to Louis's deeds during the Seventh Crusade, which is why he went to such lengths to show himself as often as possible in the company of the king.<sup>53</sup> Among the most memorable episodes involving Joinville, one could mention the episode where the seneschal asked Louis IX (1214–1270) not to abandon the crusading project prematurely (§§ 426–7). Uncertain as to the outcome of his request, Joinville took leave and went to another room. Shortly thereafter, Joinville was astounded to feel the king's hand on his shoulders. In fact, Louis had come to express his admiration for the seneschal's audacious speech before the grandees of the crusade (§ 431). Even a writer with a clerical background such as Froissart depicted himself as a character in the third Book of his *Chroniques*. Recent criticism has already analyzed Froissart's travels to Béarn, which began with a week-long horseback ride to Orthez in the company of the knight Espan of Lion, who escorted him to the court of Gaston Phoebus of Foix-Béarn (1331–1391).<sup>54</sup> In Orthez, Froissart was treated like an important author and asked by his host to read selections aloud from his *Méliador*. Froissart also describes how he took advantage of his trip to Béarn in order to collect information from a number of knights on various events of the Hundred Years War. Thus, Froissart informs us on how medieval historians worked even when they were not eyewitnesses of the historical events mentioned in their works.

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*vie de saint Louis*,” *Le Moi littéraire*, ed. Russell King (Nottingham: University of Nottingham Press, 1999), 7–24; Michèle Perret, “... A la fin de sa vie ne fuz-je mie,” *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 183 (1981), 17–37; Michel Zink, *La Subjectivité littéraire: Autour du siècle de Saint Louis*. Écriture (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985), 218–39.

**53** We should not forget that Joinville was asked to write this text to support the case for Louis IX's canonization, and his testimony as eyewitness was considered extremely important in this context.

**54** Regarding Froissart's trip to Orthez, see George Diller, “Froissart's 1389 Travel to Béarn: A Voyage Narration to the Center of the *Chroniques*,” *Froissart Across the Genres*, ed. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 50–60; Kevin Brownlee, “Mimesis, Authority, and Murder: Jean Froissart's *Voyage en Béarn*,” *Translatio studii: Essays by His Students in Honor of Karl D. Uitti on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski et al. (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 65–85; *Froissart à la cour de Béarn: l'écrivain, les arts et le pouvoir*, ed. Valérie Fasseur. Texte, codex & contexte, 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009).



## The Historian as Author

But unlike Froissart, the vast majority of cleric-historians do not really possess a character figure and emphasize their authorial persona instead. Twelfth-century historians portray themselves essentially as erudite writers who have read, translated, adapted, and incorporated excerpts from other texts into their own histories. Geoffrey Gaimar, for instance, bases his authority on a number of books which helped him write his *Estoire des Engleis*:

He obtained a large number of copies of books—English books, by dint of learned reading, and books both in the French vernacular and Latin—before finally managing to bring his work to a conclusion.<sup>55</sup>

He then provides us with a short inventory of the books that he used (“Walter Espec’s book,” “the good book of Oxford,” “the Winchester History”) and even a detailed description of the circumstances that allowed him to obtain these books.<sup>56</sup> But Gaimar was not willing to be seen merely as a passive receptacle of the authority of older books. In fact, the process of compilation as described by Gaimar involved considerable amounts of active research, comparison of documents, translation, rewriting, and creative writing. Although Gaimar never claims the scholarly title of *maistre*, in the epilogue to the *Estoire*, he does suggest that he was entirely worthy of it. Posterity actually granted his wish, as results from the fourteenth-century manuscript R of the *Estoire* (London British Library Royal 13.A.xxi), which begins with a headline that reads, “Here begins the history of the English in the French adaptation of Master Geffrei Gaimar.”<sup>57</sup>

Like Gaimar, Wace admits in his *Roman de Brut* that part of his work is based on translations of other works (in this case, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*

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<sup>55</sup> “Il purchaça maint esamplaire, / livres engleis, e par gramaire / e en romanz e en latin, / ainz k’en pleüst traire à la fin,” Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), vv. 6441–4, 349; see also the “Appendix,” 352–53, in which Gaimar insists on the veracity of his source documents.

<sup>56</sup> Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis* (see note 55), 348–51.

<sup>57</sup> “[C]i commence l’estoire des Engleis solum la translacion Maistre Geffrei Gaimar.” Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis* (see note 55), epilogue. On Gaimar and the epilogue to the *Estoire*, see also Alexander Bell, “The Epilogue to Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis*,” *Modern Language Review* 25 (1930): 52–59, as well as Ian Short, “Gaimar’s Epilogue and Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Liber vetustissimus*,” *Speculum* 69 (1994): 323–44.



*Regum Britanniae*, a source that remains unnamed in Wace's text).<sup>58</sup> But unlike Gaimar, Wace explicitly presents himself as a scholar (maistre) in the epilogue to the *Brut* ("Master Wace made this narrative"),<sup>59</sup> as well as in the *Roman de Rou*, where he introduces himself as a "cleric from Caen by the name of Master Vace."<sup>60</sup> Wace never calls himself an author but he does draw a very subtle parallel between the "authors of old" ("li auctor"), without whose writings the remembrance of times past would have been lost, and clerics like him who contributed as well to immortalizing history through their writings.<sup>61</sup>

Historiography in thirteenth-century France is essentially dominated by historians who bring their *hypostasis* as eyewitness or character to the foreground, whereas historians who emphasize their authorial persona are fairly rare. Henri of Valenciennes presents himself simply as a "writer who can spin a good story" ("biel dire et de traitier," § I), while Philip of Novara's self-portrait as a writer is slightly more elaborate, for he is a historian as well as a poet. Novara's history of the Ibelin dynasty of Cyprus is in fact filled with lyrical insertions composed by none other than himself, "the nightingale."<sup>62</sup> The chronicle of this intriguing historian-cum-troubadour is also replete with

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58 "Maistre Wace l'ad translate / Ki en conte la verité." ("Master Wace has translated it and tells it truthfully"), Wace, *Roman de Brut* (see note 30), vv. 8–9, 3. See also *Maistre Wace: A Celebration: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Held in Jersey, 10–12 September 2004*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Judith Weiss (St Helier: Société Jersiaise, 2006).

59 "Fist mestre Wace cest romanz," Wace, *Roman de Brut* (see note 30), v. 14866, 373.

60 "Un clerc de Caen, qui out non Mestre Vace" (v. 3). Later in the *Rou*, he mentions that he is originally from the Isle of Jersey ("Wace, de l'isle de Gersui", v. 5302), that he was educated in Caen ("a Caem fu petiz portez") and that he spent part of his life in "France" (most probably the present-day Ile-de France), cf. *The History of the Norman People: Wace's Roman de Rou*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Elizabeth Van Houts, trans. Glyn S. Burgess (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 150.

61 Wace, *Roman de Rou* (see note 60), v. 10. Wace's explanation of the role of the clerics is indeed a remarkable one: "Toute rien se torne en déclin, / tout chiet, tout meurt, tout vet a fin; / hons meurt, fer use, fust porrist, / tour font, mur chiet, rose flaistris, / cheval trebuche, drap vieillist, / toute ovre faite o mainz porrist. / Bien entent et conoiz et sai / quer tuit morront et clerc et lai, / et moult ara lor renommee/ après lor mort courte duree, / se par clerc nen est mise en livre; / ne puet par el durer ne vivre ..." ("Everything turns to decline, everything fails, everything dies, everything comes to an end. A man dies, iron wears out, wood rots, a tower collapses, a wall falls down, a rose withers, a horse stumbles, cloth grows old; everything made by hand perishes. I understand completely and am fully aware that all men die, cleric and lay, and that after their death their fame will be short-lived, unless it is set down in a book by a cleric; it cannot survive or live in any other way ..."), emphasis mine. Wace, *Roman de Rou* (see note 60), vv. 65–76.

62 "Je suy li rocignol," Philippe de Novare, *Mémoires* (see note 43), § LV, v. 80, 32.

literary references (many of them from the *Roman de Renart*), which help create the image of a highly sophisticated writer.<sup>63</sup>

However, Henri of Valenciennes and Philip of Novara's self-representations appear rather timid in comparison with the authorial *personae* of late medieval chroniclers such as Jean Froissart, Christine of Pizan, Georges Chastelain, Jean Molinet, and others. Several critics have correctly pointed out that the late medieval period in France was a time of recognition and exaltation of the authority of contemporary French writers.<sup>64</sup> At that time, an increasing number of French writers are mentioned in lists of famous authors. In the *Champion des Dames*, for instance, Martin le Franc (1410–1461) praised the writings of Jean Froissart, Guillaume of Machaut (ca. 1300–1377), Alain Chartier (1385–1430/1440), and others, including Christine of Pizan, whom he deemed to be the equal of Cicero and Cato the Elder.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the gap that existed in the past between Greek and Latin *auctoritates* and vernacular writers is becoming increasingly narrower during the autumn of the Middle Ages.

Since we cannot analyze all of the historians mentioned above, let us focus on a few major authorial figures from late medieval France. In the prologue to the fourth Book of his *Chronicles*, Jean Froissart provides us with a few autobiographical elements. He says, for instance, that he began his career as a clerk and poet at the court of the English queen Philippa of Hainault (1314–1369), “whom [he] served in [his] youth as a cleric and wrote for her beautiful love poems.”<sup>66</sup> In the third Book, Froissart also mentioned that his host Gaston Phoebus often invited him to read aloud passages from his novel *Meliador*, which reminds

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<sup>63</sup> His master Ibelin, for instance, is compared to the wolf Ysengrin, and later to an innocent stag who is attacked by the “lion” Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II.

<sup>64</sup> See Suzanne Bagoly, “De Mainctz auteurs une progression: un siècle à la recherche du Parnasse français,” *Le Moyen Français* 17 (1985): 83–123; Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, “De Guillaume de Machaut aux rhétoriciens: À la recherche d’un Parnasse français,” *Histoire des Poétiques*, ed. Jean Bessière et al. PUF fondamental (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 85–101; Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, “Fama et les preux: Nom et renom à la fin du Moyen Âge,” *Médiévales* 12/24 (1993): 35–44; “A la recherche des pères: La liste des auteurs illustres à la fin du Moyen Âge,” *Modern Language Notes* 116 (2001), 630–43; Bernard Guenée, “Ego, je: L’affirmation de soi par les historiens français (XIVe–XVe s.),” *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Comptes rendus des séances de l’année 2005*, fasc. 2 (2005): 597–611; and *Du Guesclin et Froissart: La fabrication de la renommée* (Paris: Tallandier, 2008).

<sup>65</sup> “Mais selle fut Tulle ou Cathon,” Martin le Franc, *Le Champion des Dames*, Ms. B123, f t 2 r., Lyon G. Le Roy, Library of the University of Liège, 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>66</sup> “À laquelle en ma jonesse je fuy clerck et la servioie de biaux dittiés et traittiés amoureux,” Jean Froissart, *Chroniques: Livre III, Du Voyage en Béarn à la campagne de Gascogne. Livre IV, Années 1389–1400*, ed. Peter F. Ainsworth and Alberto Varvaro (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2004), IV § 1, 344.

the readers that Froissart was also a successful novelist.<sup>67</sup> But in the *Chroniques*, Froissart is first and foremost a historian. In the prologue to the first Book of his chronicles, Froissart notes, as mentioned earlier, that his writings were inspired by the chronicles of Jean le Bel.<sup>68</sup> Although he does present Jean le Bel as a giant on whose shoulders the dwarf Froissart is standing, the French chronicler also notes that he continued his predecessor's work by adding some of his own materials.<sup>69</sup> At the end of the prologue, Froissart is in fact far from a dwarf, as he boldly claims the title of author:

And so that future generations know who wrote this story and who its *author* was, I would like to introduce myself. I am Sir Jean Froissart, born in the county of Hainault, in the beautiful city of Valenciennes.<sup>70</sup>

Froissart is thus the first vernacular historian to claim the title of *auteur*, and he is also a path-opener for future French historians.<sup>71</sup> As noted earlier, the title of author (spelled *acteur*, *actères*, *auctour*, or *autour*) was usually reserved for famous Greek and Latin *auctores*, and no medieval writer would have dared bestow this prestigious title upon himself. After Froissart, other historians will be emboldened to claim this title too. Such is the case with Christine of Pizan who, although seemingly humble in relation to the *auctores* that she cites in her *Livre des fais de Charles V*, often uses these citations to emphasize her own erudition and her own authorial persona. Thus, in the countless digressions

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67 "Ou dit livre, qui s'appelle Meliader ... ; et toutes les nuis après son soupper je lui en lisoie," ("the said book called *Meliador*, from which I would read it to him every night after dinner"), Froissart, *Chroniques* (see note 66), III § 13, 174.

68 "Hystoriïet et augmenté à le mienne," Jean Froissart, *Chroniques: Livre I (première partie, 1325–1350) et Livre II* (see note 31), prologue, 71.

69 See also Peter F. Ainsworth, "Configuring Transience: Patterns of Transmission and Transmissibility in the *Chroniques* (1395–1399)," *Froissart Across the Genres*, ed. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Gainesville: University Press Florida, 1998), 15–39, and Laurence Harf-Lancner, "Les prologues des *Chroniques* de Froissart: Le triomphe du clerc sur le chevalier," *Seuils de l'œuvre dans le texte médiéval*, ed. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Laurence Harf-Lancner, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne nouvelle, 2002), I, 147–75.

70 "Et pour che que ou temps à venir on puis savoir qui a mis ceste hystore sus, et qui en a esté *actères*, je me voel nommer. On m'appelle, qui tant me voet honnerer sire Jehan Froissart, net de la conté de Haynau et de la bonne, belle et friche ville de Valenciennes," Jean Froissart, *Chroniques* (see note 31), I, prologue, 77.

71 For more on Froissart, see also *Froissart: Historian*, ed. J. J. N. Palmer (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1981); Peter Ainsworth, *Froissart and the Fabric of History: Truth, Myth, and Fiction in the Chroniques* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Michel Zink, *Froissart et le temps. Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998); and *Froissart dans sa forge: Colloque réuni à Paris, du 4 au 6 novembre 2004* (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2006).

from the *Livre des fais*, Pizan is able to demonstrate her remarkable historical, philosophical, philological, and literary knowledge.<sup>72</sup> Together with her tremendous erudition, her remarkable literary and historical skills allow her to present herself as an *auteur* (this is the phrase which appears in the title of this essay: “*auteur de ce livre*” “author of this book”).<sup>73</sup>

Georges Chastellain, too, dwells on his authorial image in the *Chroniques* and in his other writings. In the *Chroniques*, Chastellain emphasizes his experience as an observer of recent history: the earth replete with vanity, ignorance, disobedience, treachery, tyranny, mutiny, and other evils and vices. Therefore he, Georges Chastellain, (“Je doncques, GEORGE CHASTELLAIN”), bread-master of the highly esteemed Prince Philip of Burgundy (1396–1467), having received a good education (“sobrement instruit ès letters”) and read the writings of the major historians of his time (“ay pris et recueilly devers moy les escrits des historiographes nouveaux de mon temps”), is proud of his work as historiographe.<sup>74</sup> Also, like Froissart and Pizan, Chastellain is also an author (“acteur”), as he proclaims himself in the *Livre de la Paix* and the *Exposition sur vérité mal prise*.<sup>75</sup>

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72 See Liliane Dulac, “La Figure de l’écrivain dans quelques traités en prose de Christine de Pizan,” *Figures de l’écrivain au Moyen Âge* (see note 35), 113–23; “De l’art de la digression dans *Le Livre des Fais et bonnes meurs du sage Roy Charles V*,” *City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan* (see note 32), 148–57; Eric Hicks, “Excerpts and Originality: Authorial Purpose in the *Fais et bonnes meurs*,” *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies of Christine de Pizan in Honour of Angus J. Kennedy*, ed. John Campbell and Nadia Margolis (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 221–31.

73 Christine de Pizan, *Livre des fais* (see note 13) I, § 36, 104.

74 Georges Chastellain, *Œuvres de Georges Chastellain*, ed. M. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 8 vols. (Geneva: Slatkine, 1971), I, 11–12. On Chastellain as “historiographe,” see Jean-Claude Delclos, *Le témoignage de Georges Chastellain, historiographe de Philippe le Bon et Charles le Téméraire* (Geneva: Droz, 1980); Graeme Small, *George Chastellain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy: Political and Historical Culture at Court in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997); Estelle Doudet, “La condition de l’historiographe: Enquête sur une figure et un statut dans l’œuvre de George Chastellain,” *Le Moyen Âge* 112.3–4 (2006): 545–56.

75 Georges Chastellain, “Exposicions sur vérité mal prise,” *Œuvres de Georges Chastellain*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (see note 74), vol. 6, 265, 275–76, 299, 319–20; *Le Livre de Paix*, ed. Tania Van Hemelryck. *Classiques français du Moyen Âge*, 148 (Paris: Champion, 2006), 70, 79, 82, 105, 122.

## Conclusion

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, French historians increasingly claim the title of authorities. The arguments they invoke in support of this claim are sometimes different, sometimes similar, often subjective, but they were certainly successful, for many of Froissart, Pizan, Chastellain, Molinet, Commynes, and La Marche's readers or continuators quote them as valuable authorities. For instance, Froissart's work was continued by Enguerrand of Monstrelet (ca. 1390–1453), who considered Froissart “a highly renowned historian;”<sup>76</sup> Monstrelet's own work was later continued by Mathieu d'Escouchy (1420–1482), who described Monstrelet as “a noble man and a great historian.”<sup>77</sup> Molinet wrote that he viewed Chastellain as a “highly eloquent man,” wise, able to speak three languages, and “an expert orator who had no equal in his time.”<sup>78</sup> Let us also remember that Olivier of la Marche was mentioning Chastellain and Molinet as authorities, whereas Jean Lemaire of Belges (ca. 1473–ca. 1525) considered that since Chastellain and Molinet had immortalized so many heroes, they must be immortal themselves.<sup>79</sup> Even knights-cum-historians, such as Philippe of Commynes and Olivier of la Marche, will be mentioned as *auteurs* by posterity. In the preface to the 1552 edition of Commynes's memoirs published with Galliot du Pré (d. 1561), Renaissance editor Denis Sauvage (1520–1587) calls the French memoirist an *Auteur* and “the most excellent French historian,” whereas Olivier of la Marche is mentioned as *acteur* in the paratext of the one of the earliest manuscripts of his *Mémoires* (BNF ms. fr. 2868).<sup>80</sup> Also in the sixteenth century, the great Montaigne claimed that of all historians, he enjoyed reading Froissart because he presented the bare truth and let the reader judge for himself. As a result, for the truthfulness of his *Chronicles*, Froissart was compared by Montaigne to Plutarch, Tacitus, Seneca, and Caesar.

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76 “Très renommé historien,” Enguerrand de Monstrelet, *Chronique d'Enguerrand de Monstrelet*, ed. Louis Douët-D'Arcq, 6 vols. (Paris: J. Renouard, 1827), vol. 1, 5 (my translation).

77 “Noble homme et vaillant historien,” Mathieu d'Escouchy, *Chronique de Mathieu d'Escouchy*, ed. G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, 3 vols. (Paris: J. Renouard, 1863), vol 1., 2–3 (my translation).

78 “Sire George Chastellain, homme très eloquent, cler d'esprit, très aigu d'engin, prompt en trois langages, très expert orateur, et le non pareil en son temps.” Jean Molinet, *Chroniques de Jean Molinet*, ed. J.-A. Buchon, 5 vols. (Paris: Verdrière, 1827), vol. 1, 23.

79 “Ceulx cy font les gens vivre, et la mort ont vaincu,” Jean Lemaire de Belges, *Oeuvres*, ed. J. Stecher, 4 vols. (Louvain: Lefever, 1891), vol. 4, 320 (my translation).

80 In fact, Denis Sauvage published the works of many a medieval historian. See my article “Denis Sauvage: The Editing of Medieval Chronicles in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 7 (2010): 255–78.

A historical cycle in which Greek and Latin writers had dominated the entire scholarly scene was now coming to a close. The elaboration of complex self-representations by vernacular writers, as part of the growing authorial self-awareness in the late medieval period, played a fundamental part in this process of intellectual rebalancing between the authority of Ancients and Moderns. After several centuries of history-writing in the vernacular, major French historians were finally being recognized as authorities along with the *auctoritates* of the ancient world.

Kirsi Kanerva

# Rituals for the Restless Dead: The Authority of the Deceased in Medieval Iceland<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the authority of the dead and its nature, and the pre-conditions and restrictions for its expression in medieval Iceland. Authority, in this article, is considered to be something that is vested in people, whether dead or alive.<sup>2</sup> It is “a relation that exists between individuals, in which one does [or is expected to do] as indicated by another what he or she would not do in the absence of such indication.”<sup>3</sup> It can also be considered an innate capacity for influencing and exercising power and dominance over an individual or a group. Authority, in this case the authority of the dead, is also a power that works against the “agent’s real interests without their knowing,” or denies or minimizes their relative autonomy.<sup>4</sup> However, whether this authority is found to be legitimate and justified, varies and depends, for instance, on world view, personality and power hierarchies. From the perspective of collectively held beliefs its power may be accepted, but obedience is nevertheless not necessarily conceived as “a just commitment.”<sup>5</sup> For this reason, authority can also be controlled or restricted in various ways. Here I will concentrate on the representation of the authority of the dead and its nature, and use of

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<sup>2</sup> Ian P. Wei, “Introduction,” *Authority and Community in the Middle Ages*, ed. Donald Mowbray, Rhiannon Purdie, and Ian P. Wei (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1999), xiii–xviii; here xiii.

<sup>3</sup> E. Zambrano, “Authority, Social Theories of,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001), 978–82.

<sup>4</sup> S. R. Clegg, “Power in Society,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (see note 3), 11932–36.

<sup>5</sup> B. Badie, “Legitimacy, Sociology of,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (see note 3), 8706–09.

rituals as a means to control, either successfully or unsuccessfully, the influence of the deceased in medieval Iceland.

The sources of my study consist of the *Íslendingasögur*, the so-called Icelandic Family Sagas that were written in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iceland. They mainly describe events that, according to the sagas, took place in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In the contemporary medieval culture, *Íslendingasögur* were regarded as works with historical value; stories about heathen ancestors based on oral tradition and written down in a culture that had been Christian for over 200 years, the actual conversion having occurred in the year 999/1000.<sup>6</sup> The *Íslendingasögur* were written or commissioned mainly by the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century descendants of the main characters described in the texts. The sagas were also valued as entertainment, and could be read aloud, their audience thus consisting of people from diverse social layers. The writers and commissioners also represented the thirteenth- to fourteenth-centuries Icelandic literary elite. Given this, and the common medieval European view that literature had a didactic purpose, we may assume that the sagas were also used as educational texts and forums for discussion of moral issues.<sup>7</sup> Normative views may thus be found in sagas, and their discursive nature may reveal to us how medieval Icelanders saw or wanted contemporary people to understand the authority of the dead, the perspective being that of the literary elite.

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<sup>6</sup> Allowing for the change in the calendar the actual moment was more likely at the end of the year 999.

<sup>7</sup> A good overview of the *Íslendingasögur* can be found e.g. in Carol J. Clover, "Icelandic Family Sagas," *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, ed. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow. *Islandica*, 45 (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 239–315; Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*, trans. from Icelandic by Nicholas Jones. Publications of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and representation in the sagas of the Icelanders*, trans. from Icelandic by Andrew Wawn. (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1998). On the social and political significance on *Íslendingasögur* in medieval Iceland, see also Axel Kristinsson, "Lords and Literature: The Icelandic Sagas as Political and Social Instruments," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 28 (2003): 1–17; Jesse L. Byock, "Social Memory and the Sagas: The Case of *Egils saga*," *Scandinavian Studies* 76, 3 (2004): 299–316. On the educative role of literature and its part in the so-called 'civilizing process' see e.g. the work discussing the ideal chivalric ideas in tenth to thirteenth-century Ottonian court by Stephen C. Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939–1210*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), *passim*.



The *Íslendingasögur* contain numerous stories about ghosts.<sup>8</sup> Icelandic medieval ghosts were not ethereal phantoms dressed in white, but dead people appearing to the living in their physical, recognizable bodies.<sup>9</sup> These corporeal, physical revenants, which I will call “restless dead,” “living dead” or ghosts, seem to have both malevolent and benevolent functions in sagas<sup>10</sup>:

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**8** The words used for “ghosts” in sagas were, e.g., *draugr*, *aptrganga*, and *fyrirburðir*. On their meanings, see Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (hereafter *CGV*) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 23, 103–04, 182.

**9** The corporeal essence of medieval Icelandic ghosts in saga literature makes them somewhat peculiar by comparison with continental phantoms. Augustine of Hippo, for instance, regarded ghosts as spiritual images of demonic origin (unless they were saints), rather than the souls or bodies of the deceased, since according to him it was not possible for the dead to return. However, some Christian authorities, such as Gregory the Great, Caesarius of Heisterbach, and Thietmar of Merseburg implied that the dead could appear to the living as physical manifestations, their souls retaining their personal identities. John D. Martin, “Law and the (Un)Dead: Medieval Models for Understanding the Hauntings in *Eyrbyggja saga*,” *Saga-Book* 29 (2005): 67–82; Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 17–24. Whether influenced by these ideas or not, medieval Icelanders described their ghosts as tangible and corporeal in sagas. On corporeal ghosts in English late medieval texts, compare also Jacqueline Simpson, “Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse? Debatable Apparitions in Medieval England,” *Folklore* 114 (2003): 389–402.

**10** On medieval Icelandic ghosts, see, e.g., Thomas A. DuBois, *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 69–91; Hilda Roderick Ellis, *The Road to Hel: A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature*, 2nd ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977); Hilda Roderick Ellis Davidson. “The Restless Dead: An Icelandic Ghost Story,” *The Folklore of Ghosts*, ed. Hilda R. Ellis Davidson and W. M. S. Russell. Folklore Society, Mistletoe Series, 15 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981), 155–75; Jürg Glauser, “Draugar and Aptrganga,” *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993), 623–24; Kjartan G. Ottósson, *Fróðárundur í Eyrbyggju*. Studia Islandica, 42 (Reykjavík: Menningarsjóðs, 1983); John Lindow, “Þorsteins þáttur skelks and the Verisimilitude of Supernatural Experience in Saga Literature,” *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*, ed. John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, and Gerd Wolfgang Weber. The Viking Collection, Studies in Northern Civilization, 3 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), 264–80; Martin, “Law and the (Un)Dead” (see note 9), 67–82; Torfi H. Tulinius, “Framliðnir feður: Um fornaskju og frásagnarlist í Eyrbyggju, Egli og Grettlu,” *Heiðin minni: Greinar um fornar bókmenntir*, ed. Haraldur Bessason and Baldur Hafstað (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, háskólaforlag Máls og menningar, 1999), 283–316; Vésteinn Ólason, “The Un/Grateful Dead: From Baldr to Bægifótr,” *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross. The Viking Collection: Studies in Northern Civilization, 14 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2003), 153–71.

they may give assistance and advice to people,<sup>11</sup> but may also cause the living trouble and fear as well as madness, disease or death.<sup>12</sup> There are some things common to many of the Icelandic ghosts and ghost candidates. As might be expected, unresolved issues and conflicts in life could result in restlessness after death.<sup>13</sup> However, it has to be noted that not everyone who died leaving behind unsolved problems and conflicts became a ghost, nor did all those with complex personalities. One of the preconditions for restlessness was that the deceased had a “strong mind” that is, a certain kind of charisma<sup>14</sup> that was a product of their “personality.” Being “strong-minded” denoted that the individual was expected to have some authority over others; in other words, their strong “personality” enabled them to influence the deeds and thoughts of others, even without verbal communication. Accordingly, other people would show “compliance” and “obedience” toward the “strong-minded” person (in this case a dead one) by allowing, usually without realizing it, this authority to influence their mental functions and capacities. As a result of their submission they suffered from an excess of emotion and its consequences, perhaps illness or lunacy, or even death.

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**11** *Eiríks saga rauða*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson. Íslenzk Fornrit, 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), 193–237; here 214–17; *Grænlendinga saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson. Íslenzk Fornrit, 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), 239–69; here 258–60; *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslenzk Fornrit, 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1954), 192–95; “*Páttr Þorleifs jarlaskalds*,” *Flateyjarbók, I: En samling af Norske Konge-sagaer med indskudte mindre fortællinger om begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt annaler*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger (Christiania: P. T. Mallings forlagsboghandel, 1862), 207–15; here 214–15.

**12** *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson. Íslenzk Fornrit, 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), 1–184; here 93–95, 146–52, 169–76; *Eiríks saga rauða* (see note 11), 214–16; *Flóamanna saga*, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. Íslenzk Fornrit, 13 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1991), 229–327; here 255–56; *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, ed. Guðni Jónsson. Íslenzk Fornrit, 7 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1936), 1–290; here 113–23; *Laxdæla saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslenzk Fornrit, 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1934), 1–248; here 39–40.

**13** Vésteinn Ólason, “The Un/Grateful Dead” (see note 10), here 164–165.

**14** B. S. Turner, “Charisma and Charismatic,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (see note 3), 1651–53. See also Sverre Bagge’s chapter in this book on authority as a result of personal charisma deriving from insight and intellectual capacity instead of hereditary right in medieval Norway which likewise emphasizes the personal characteristics as a decisive factor in the process of acquiring authority.

People skilled in witchcraft or possessing other supernatural skills—such as being capable of becoming a berserker<sup>15</sup> in battle—were regarded as possible (malevolent) ghost candidates as well. In many cases, it was—in modern terms—the personality of the person in life that roused thoughts about the possibility of him or her becoming a malevolent ghost after death. These people often had an unusual or extraordinary appearance such as remarkable size or wolf-grey hair and were generally awkward while living, and became even more difficult after they died.<sup>16</sup>

The *Íslendingasögur* do not explicitly describe any worship of ancestors<sup>17</sup> for whom the only chance to enact authority over the living descendants in sagas was to become posthumously restless. The dead generally became restless of their own free, and often malevolent, will. Activity after death was usually not a punishment for the deceased, but an expression of their wish to continue to participate in the society of the living<sup>18</sup> presumably based on the prevailing idea that some kind of life power and vitality remained in the human body after death.<sup>19</sup> In *Íslendingasögur* the appearance of a deliberately malevolent

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**15** In Icelandic Family Sagas a berserker is a warrior capable of expressing so-called berserk rage of which external signs can be, e.g., howling and beating and biting one's shield. Berserkers are usually invulnerable to weapons, and in *Íslendingasögur* they are often represented in a negative light as antagonists. Benjamin Blaney, "Berserkr," *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano (see note 10), 37–38; Jens Peter Schjødt, "The Warrior in Old Norse Religion," *Ideology and Power in the Viking and Middle Ages: Scandinavia, Iceland, Ireland, Orkney and the Faeroes*, ed. Gro Steinsland, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, Jan Erik Rekdal, and Ian Beuermann. The Northern World, 52 (Leiden and Boston: Brill 2011), 269–95; consult also the relevant research literature cited there. See also *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 61; *Flóamanna saga* (see note 12), 260; *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* (see note 12), 135–36; *Ynglinga saga* in *Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla*, 2, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson. Íslensk Fornrit, 26 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941), 9–83; here 17.

**16** Kjartan G. Ottósson, *Fróðárundur* (see note 10), 49–50; Arnved Nedkvitne, *Mötet med döden i norrön medeltid*, trans. Bo Eriksson Janbrink (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2004), 38. See also Skalla-Grímr Kveld-Úlfsson and his father Kveld-Úlfr Bjálfason in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal. Íslensk Fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1933), 3–5, 50, 101–02; Gyða in *Flóamanna saga* (see note 12), 254–56; Þórgunna in *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 139; and Hrapp in *Laxdæla saga* (see note 12), 39–40.

**17** The definition of 'ancestor worship' is problematic, however; it could be argued that the *Íslendingasögur* genre as such was a manner of ancestor worship as it depicted stories of ancestors who had inhabited Iceland in the faraway past.

**18** Vésteinn Ólason, "The Un/Grateful Dead" (see note 10), 161; Nedkvitne, *Mötet med döden* (see note 16), 38–43. See also Jesse L. Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 133; Martin, "Law and the (Un)Dead" (see note 9), 75–80.

**19** Vésteinn Ólason, "The Un/Grateful Dead" (see note 10) here 161, 166–167, 169. This idea appears to have survived in later Icelandic folklore, and similarities can be found e.g., in

ghost (on which I will focus here) seems to have been dependent on the social milieu the living predecessor had inhabited and the individual who was ultimately able to banish or control it. The corporeal ghosts could act in sagas as agents of order, pointing to various psychosocial conflicts within the community where they appeared and granting the ghost-banisher a chance both to solve these socially problematic issues and to renegotiate (and usually improve) his social status. Generally people involved in these psychosocial conflicts—such as individuals with an indeterminate social status<sup>20</sup> in the

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nineteenth and early twentieth-century Finnish folklore according to which the dead corpse possessed (malevolent or beneficent) power as long as there was flesh on the bones. For the Finnish tradition, see Kaarina Koski, *Kuoleman voimat: Kirkonväki suomalaisessa uskomusperinteessä*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 1313 (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2011), 94–97. For the similarities in broader medieval context, see Nancy Caciola, “Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture,” *Past & Present* 152 (1996): 3–45, here 27–29, 31–33. In other, more mythical saga genres such as Eddic poetry and the *fornaldarsögur* (also called Legendary sagas) the dead could be waked up against their own will by various mythical beings such as heathen gods and goddesses by using witchcraft known as *seiðr* to serve their own interests. See e.g., the Eddic poems *Völuspá* and *Baldrs draumar*, in both of which Óðinn wakes up a *völva* (pl. *völur*), that is a female seeress ascribed with skills to predict the future and use magic effectively, in order to gain knowledge and wisdom from her. See *Völuspá* and *Baldrs draumar* in *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*. 1, Text, ed. Gustav Neckel. Germanische Bibliothek, 4 Reihe, Texte (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1962), here 1–16, 277–279. On the dead waked up with *seiðr* in *fornaldarsögur*, see e.g. *Sörla þáttur* in *Flateyjarbók, I* (see note 11), 275–283; *Hrólfs saga kraka*, ed. D. Slay. Editiones Arnarnagæanæ, Series B, 1 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1960), 1–132; here 119–120. On heathen gods and their skills in *seiðr* magic, see e.g., Stephen A. Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*. The Middle Ages Series. (Philadelphia and Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), here 28, 76–81, 86. On the *völva*-seeresses see John McKinnell, “Encounters with *Völur*,” *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross. The Viking Collection: Studies in Northern Civilization, 14 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2003), 110–131. On the *seiðr* magic in general, see Dag Strömbäck, *Sejd och andra studier i nordisk själsuppfattning*. Acta Academiae Regiae Gustavi Adolphi, 72 (Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur; Gidlund, 2000 [orig. 1935]). In *Íslendingasögur* that are under discussion here and that contain less mythical elements than the two genres mentioned above the role of *seiðr* is not explicit, however. The contradiction apparent in the activeness of the deceased in *Íslendingasögur* and the more subordinate role of the dead in the mythical sources would nevertheless require a study of its own and because of this cannot be discussed here in greater depth.

**20** Such people could include, e.g., concubines’ sons, children born out of wedlock, young men lacking their fathers’ material and mental support, and widowed women. See Kirsi Kanerva, “Messages from the Otherworld: The Roles of the Dead in Medieval Iceland,” *Deconstructing Death: Changing Cultures of Death, Dying, Bereavement and Care in the Nordic Countries*, ed. Michael Hviid Jacobsen (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, forthcoming).

context of the saga—had no other choice but to encounter and banish the malevolent restless dead. In sagas, the dead always vanish in the end; the benevolent dead withdraw voluntarily from the realm of the living, but the malevolent ones do not disappear until a hero manages to destroy them, usually by decapitating the ghost with a sword or by burning its body or, in some cases, with the help of the Law and Christian rituals. Banishing the malevolent ghost is always a difficult task but brings the hero great honor and fame.<sup>21</sup>

In certain cases, the activities of the deceased are prevented either completely or in part by certain rituals. If successful, the ritualistic acts would prevent the “strong-minded” dead from becoming restless, although there were occasions when they did not work. In this chapter, I will refer to two sagas where the post-mortem activity of a deceased man is prevented or restricted by rituals: *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* and *Eyrbyggja saga*. *Egils saga* focuses on the life of Egill Skalla-Grímsson and tells stories from his grandfather Kveld-Úlfr Bjálfason’s time to Egill’s own death. In this saga, when Egill’s father Skalla-Grímr Kveld-Úlfsson dies, he is expected to return. His posthumous restlessness is nevertheless prevented through the rituals that Egill performs for the corpse, which will be described more thoroughly below. The saga was probably compiled in the first half of the thirteenth-century by Snorri Sturluson, a famous Icelandic saga author who was also responsible for writing sagas about the Norwegian kings and who was a member of a powerful thirteenth-century Icelandic family, the Sturlungs. According to genealogies, Skalla-Grímr and Egill were maternal ancestors of Snorri Sturluson.<sup>22</sup> In *Eyrbyggja saga*, a man called Þórólfr bægifótr (Lame-foot) Bjarnarson dies and his son, Arnkell goði<sup>23</sup> Þórólfsson bægifóts, performs

21 Kanerva, “Messages from the Otherworld,” (see note 20); Kirsi Kanerva, “The Role of the Dead in Medieval Iceland: A Case Study of *Eyrbyggja saga*,” *Collegium Medievale* 24 (2011): 23–48.

22 The text survives in several manuscripts. The main manuscripts include *Möðruvallabók* (fourteenth-century), *Wolfenbüttelbók* (Ms. Cod. Guelf. 9.10. 4to, Wolfenbüttel (fourteenth-century), and *Ketilsbók* (Ms. AM 453, 4to, Copenhagen, seventeenth-century), and fragments of another manuscript (Ms. AM 162 A, fol, thirteenth-century) also exist. Rudolf Simek and Hermann Pálsson, *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur*, 2nd ed. Kröners Taschenausgabe, 490 (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2007), 70–72; Sigurður Nordal, “Formáli,” *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (see note 16), v–cv; here lii–xcix; Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Matter of the North: The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-Century Iceland*, trans. Randi C. Eldevik. The Viking Collection: Studies in Northern Civilization, 13 (Odense: Odense University Press, 2002), 234–37.

23 A chieftain. On the concept of goði, see Jesse L. Byock, “Goði,” *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano (see note 10), 230–31; Dag Strömbäck, *The Conversion of*

rituals similar to those Egill performs for his father's corpse. Þórólfr nevertheless stays peacefully in his grave only when the son is nearby, but otherwise harasses the living. The corpse is transferred to a new burial place where it lies peacefully until Arnkell is killed, after which Þórólfr becomes restless again. This time his body is exhumed and burned, but afterwards Þórólfr makes his last appearance, as a bull, and kills the man responsible for the burning. After this the bull runs into a swamp where it finally disappears. *Eyrbyggja saga* predates the year 1262, the year when Iceland came under the rule of the Norwegian king. Here a version based on an early fifteenth-century manuscript *Vatnshyrna* will be used.<sup>24</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* relates stories of many important families in Snæfellsnes in western Iceland, but focuses on Arnkell's enemy, a chieftain called Snorri goði Þorgrímsen, who was also an ancestor of the above-mentioned thirteenth-century Sturlung family.

To discuss the authority of the dead in the aforesaid sources, I will study how it was controlled, either successfully or unsuccessfully, by the use of rituals. In order to reach the views and interpretations of the contemporary people in thirteenth-century Iceland when the texts were written, I will read the stories intertextually in connection with other medieval Icelandic texts and examine the context of each individual saga that I use as my source.<sup>25</sup>

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*Iceland: A Survey*, trans. Peter Foote. Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series, 6 (London: University College, 1975), 38–45.

**24** The saga has survived in three different versions, in four fragmentary vellum manuscripts and several paper manuscripts. The so-called *Vatnshyrna* manuscript, written around 1400 by Jón Hákonarson, was lost in the Copenhagen fire in 1728, but paper copies of the text have survived (e.g., Ms. AM 448, 4to; AM 442, 4to). Part of another version has survived in a fourteenth-century manuscript in the Wolfenbüttel library in Germany (Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 9.10. 4to), and fragments of a related thirteenth-century Ms. AM 162 E fol survive. In addition to this, there are fragments of a third version, the earliest of these in a fifteenth-century manuscript *Melabók* (AM 445 b, 4to) compiled in western Iceland. Simek and Hermann Pálsson, *Lexikon* (see note 22), 85, 173–74, 268, 365–66, 412–13; Matthías Þórðarson, “Formáli,” *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), v–xcvi; here lvii–lxii; Bernadine McCreesh, “Eyrbyggja saga,” *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano (see note 10), 174–75; Forrest S. Scott, “General Introduction,” *Eyrbyggja saga: The Vellum Tradition*, ed. Forrest S. Scott. Editiones Arnarnagæanæ, Series A, 18 (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels forlag, 2003), 1\*–27\*.

**25** On the methodology, see Torfi H. Tulinius, “The Prosimetrum Form 2: Verses as an Influence in Saga Composition and Interpretation,” *Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets*, ed. Russell Poole. Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, 27 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 191–217.

## Controlling the Authority of the Dead: Two Rituals

In *Egils saga*, there are several indications that Skalla-Grímr, the father of the main character Egill, will walk again after his death. He has a difficult character and conflictual relationship with his son Egill, he is a skillful blacksmith, and he is capable of berserker rage, both in battle and in daily life.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, just before Skalla-Grímr's death, he and his son Egill argue about some silver treasure that King of England, Aðalsteinn inn sigrsæli (the Victorious), has given to Egill to be brought to Skalla-Grímr as a compensation for the death of his other son (and Egill's brother) Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson, who died fighting alongside the king's troops. According to the saga, Skalla-Grímr thinks the silver belongs to him, but Egill displays no intention of giving it to his father. When Egill goes to a feast together with his wife, Skalla-Grímr takes his own gold in two chests and goes to hide them. This treasure is never found.<sup>27</sup> After returning home at midnight, Skalla-Grímr, presumably still angry,

... went to his bed and sat down with his clothes on; and in the morning ... Skalla-Grímr sat there by the headboard of his bed and was dead.<sup>28</sup>

The saga states that Egill, now the head of the house, is the only one who can straighten the stiffened body of Skalla-Grímr. It is not clear whether he is behind or in front of the seat when doing this; the saga only states that "Egill went up to the seat and took Skalla-Grímr by the shoulders."<sup>29</sup> Egill then prepares Skalla-

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26 Vésteinn Ólason, "The Un/Grateful Dead" (see note 10), 162; Nedkvitne, *Mötet med döden* (see note 16), 39. He has, for instance, killed one of the young Egill's friends in a ball game because he went berserk during the game. *Egils saga* (see note 16), 101. On smiths and their magical skills in sagas, see e.g. Randi Barndon, "Myth and Metallurgy: Some Cross-cultural Reflections on the Social Identity of the Smiths," *Old Norse Religion in Long-term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions. An International Conference in Lund, Sweden, June 3–7, 2004*, ed. Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, and Catharina Raudvere. Vägar till Midgård, 8 (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2006), 99–103; Dean A. Miller, *The Epic Hero* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 265. See also Völundr the smith and Reginn the smith in the Eddic poems *Völundarqviða* and *Reginsmál* in *Edda* (see note 19), 116–23, 173, 177.

27 *Egils saga* (see note 16), 140, 145, 173–74.

28 "... Gekk þá til rúms síns ok lagðisk niðr í klæðum sínum; en um morgininn ... þá sat Skalla-Grímr fram á stökk ok var þá andaðr," *Egils saga* (see note 16), 174. All the translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

29 "Gekk Egill fram í setit ok tók í herðar Skalla-Grími," *Egils saga* (see note 16), 174. It is nevertheless possible that he avoids looking into the eyes of Skalla-Grímr because the glance of the dead was considered perilous. On the "evil eye" of the dead, see Annette Lassen, *Øjet og*



Grímr's body for burial. This service (nábjargir) generally included closing the eyes, mouth and nostrils of the deceased.<sup>30</sup> After this he creates an opening in the southern wall of the house and the corpse is carried out through it. It is possible that this is done to prevent the return of Skalla-Grímr, since the deceased would not know its way back to the house if taken through an opening that is normally not there.<sup>31</sup> The body is then taken to its final destination, a place so remote that the men have to stay overnight on their trip (an aspect that will be dealt with shortly). The saga then describes how:

Egill let be made a mound in the front of the ness; Skalla-Grímr was placed there, and his horse, weapons and blacksmith's tools; it is not mentioned that movable property had been laid in the mound beside him.<sup>32</sup>

Egill's actions are ritualistic in nature, but they are quite the opposite of the ordinary burial procedures that are described in sagas, where corpses are transported through ordinary doors, or rendering the last service to a dead body does not require particular rituals, and neither the eyes nor the body of the deceased are perilous to the living.<sup>33</sup> Given the extraordinary rituals performed by Egill, Skalla-Grímr's body obviously needs some special attention. Egill's rituals prove effective and his father expresses no post-mortem activity whatsoever.

In *Eyrbyggja saga* a noteworthy chieftain (goði) called Arnkell seems to be less successful with his father Þórólfr bægifótr, who has been a great viking

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*blindheden i norrøn litteratur og mytologi*. Universitets-Jubilæets Danske Samfunds Skriftserie, 13 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Forlag, Københavns universitet, 2003), 35–36, 38–39; Matthías Þórðarson, “Um dauða Skalla-Gríms og hversu hann var heyður,” *Festskrift til Finnur Jónsson 29 maj 1928*, ed. Johs. Brøndum-Nielsen et al. (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1928), 95–112; here 99–100. The most infamous eyes of the dead are those of the ghost Glámr in *Grettis saga* (see note 12), 121–23.

<sup>30</sup> *Egils saga* (see note 16), 174; Matthías Þórðarson, “Um dauða Skalla-Gríms” (see note 29), 99; CGV (see note 8), 448.

<sup>31</sup> *Egils saga* (see note 12), 174; Matthías Þórðarson, “Um dauða Skalla-Gríms” (see note 29), 100–01.

<sup>32</sup> “Lét Egill þar gera haug á framanverðu nesinu; var þar í lagðr Skalla-Grímr ok hestr hans ok vapn hans ok smíðartól; ekki er þess getit, at lausafé væri lagt í haug hjá honum,” *Egils saga* (see note 12), 174–75.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., the burials of Unnr in *djúpúðga*, Höskuldr Dala-Kollsson and Þórðr Ingunnarson in *Laxdæla saga* (see note 12), 13, 72–73, 100; Höskuldr Dala-Kollsson and Valgarðr inn grái in *Brennu-Njáls saga* (see note 11), 149, 275; Egill's brother Þórólfr in *Egils saga* (see note 16), 141–42; Arnkell and Snorri goði in *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 103, 183. On burial practices in Viking Age Scandinavia, see Gro Steinsland and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *Människor och makter i vikingarnas värld*, trans. Hans O. Sjöström (Stockholm: Ordfront förlag, 1998), 83–93; and in late medieval Scandinavia, see Nedkvitne, *Mötet med döden* (see note 16), 112–17.



during his lifetime, but also an unjust man (*ójafnaðrmaðr*).<sup>34</sup> Þórólfr has an argument with his son Arnkell *goði* one evening just before his death: Þórólfr wants to trick Arnkell's enemy, Snorri *goði*, with whom he has a personal issue, but the son is unwilling to participate in his malicious plan. Þórólfr becomes angry, and in the morning he is discovered dead, sitting upright on his high-seat. After being informed of Þórólfr's death, Arnkell *goði* returns to his father's farm and takes precautions intended to prevent any kind of harm to the living. He approaches the corpse from behind, and even covers the head with a cloth so that nobody can accidentally look into its eyes and be harmed by them.<sup>35</sup> After preparing the body for burial, his actions are similar to those of Egill, as he makes a hole in the wall through which the body is carried. Oxen then transport the corpse to its burial place in the valley, and a large mound of stones is raised above Þórólfr *bægifótr's* grave.<sup>36</sup> The verb used in the saga is "dysja," which denotes this form of burial. In sagas this form of burial was often used when burying criminals, witches or other evildoers.<sup>37</sup> A tentative suggestion may be made that the obstacles (in this case stones) were intended to prevent the dead evildoers from escaping from their graves.<sup>38</sup> The saga thus suggests that Þórólfr, as a strong-minded person and evildoer, is expected to become restless after death and needs to be physically hindered from doing so. These expectations are also implied by the fear of the inhabitants on Þórólfr's farm who were, according to the saga, all terrified as Þórólfr's death was considered so horrid.<sup>39</sup>

The rituals performed by Arnkell are quite similar to those carried out by Egill. However, they do not seem to function properly since Þórólfr *bægifótr*

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34 *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 14. *Ójafnaðrmaðr* would not respect the immunity (*helgi*) of others, but aimed at benefiting and keeping up his status to the detriment of others. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *Fortælling og ære: studier i islændingesagaerne* (Århus: Aarhus universitetsforlag, 1993), 195–97.

35 *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 92. In sagas, the heads of the witches are sometimes covered in a similar manner in order to prevent the harm from their eyes. See Lassen, *Øjet og blindheden* (see note 29), 37; *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 53; *Gísla saga Súrssonar in Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson. Íslenzk Fornrit, 6 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1943), 1–118; here 60; *Laxdæla saga* (see note 12), 109.

36 *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 90–92.

37 *CGV* (see note 8), 111. See, for instance, the burials of Stígandi in *Laxdæla saga* (see note 12), 109, and Glámr in *Grettis saga* (see note 12), 113.

38 Accordingly, when Þórólfr is buried the second time by Arnkell (see below), physical obstacles are used to prevent Þórólfr from exiting his mound.

39 "... Fólk allt var óttafullt, því at öllum þótti óþokki á andláti hans," *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 92.

remains peaceful in his mound only when his son Arnkell goði is nearby. After Arnkell returns to his own farm many people who have remained at Þórólfr's farm, including his widow, think it dangerous to go out after sunset. As winter approaches, they are certain that Þórólfr bægifótr has begun to walk again and to cause the living all sorts of trouble, including death and insanity. The ghost harasses his widow who nearly loses her wits and, finally, dies.<sup>40</sup>

Both Þórólfr bægifótr and Skalla-Grímr appear to share some of the qualities that were attributed to the concept of "strong mind" described above. They are both difficult personalities: it is implied that Skalla-Grímr possesses some supernatural skills since he is a blacksmith and could turn into a berserker,<sup>41</sup> while Þórólfr is buried in a manner appropriate for someone believed to have unresolved issues or uncanny powers (and thus expected to walk after death), such as an evildoer, criminal or witch. Moreover, both men die when they are angry and full of malevolence, additional factors that could generate posthumous restlessness.<sup>42</sup> In other words, the two of them possess a number of the signifiers that warn of probable activity after death. Their sons both realize this and because of it perform proper rituals for their fathers. However, whereas Skalla-Grímr remains permanently peaceful, Þórólfr occasionally becomes restless and expresses his ill will to the living.

If the power of the dead results from their "strong minds," as has been suggested above, Arnkell and Egill can both be regarded in the light of the sagas as individuals who, by performing rituals, are capable of controlling the powerful minds of their fathers.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, Arnkell and Egill are expressing their own authority over their dead fathers. Knowing the consequences the ghost would bring, mentioned above and shown in the example of Þórólfr, whose wife (whose name is never mentioned and who is not Arnkell's mother) finally dies because of her dead husband's continuous attacks on her,<sup>44</sup> makes clear that in the sagas the dead have to be controlled and conquered. Failing to do this leads to serious results.

It has to be noted that Arnkell himself does not suffer from any mental, physical or other serious effects of the haunting, and Egill is completely free of any symptoms since he is not haunted in the first place. In other words, the dead fathers cannot exert any authority over them. Victims of the effects of the ghosts typically consist of less powerful people, such as servants, farmworkers,

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<sup>40</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 93.

<sup>41</sup> *Egils saga* (see note 16), 78–79, 101.

<sup>42</sup> Kjartan G. Ottósson, *Fróðárundur* (see note 10), 81.

<sup>43</sup> Vésteinn Ólason, "The Un/Grateful Dead" (see note 10), 163.

<sup>44</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 93.

and other nameless or landless people.<sup>45</sup> Compliance with posthumous authority is thus commensurate with the status of the living. The rituals of both Egill and Arnkell goði appear to be acts of high status individuals, the heads of their families, intended to safeguard the people on the farms which they own and the district round about. They both succeed in doing this, but for some reason the power of Arnkell goði over the dead appears to be limited. *Eyrbyggja saga* seems to suggest that the rituals performed by him were somehow inadequate, as they functioned properly only in his presence. Yet they are almost identical to those performed by Egill: how should we explain the difference?

## The Authority of the Dead Harnessed for the Benefit of the Living?

Unlike Egill, Arnkell goði buries his father quite close to his dwellings; the saga mentions that Þórólfr is buried in Þórsardal where his farm, Hvammr, is also situated.<sup>46</sup> When Arnkell's father starts walking again after Arnkell has left the district, the son is forced to remove the corpse from its first resting place and re-bury it further away from the farm. The new burial place is determined by the deceased Þórólfr himself, as his body becomes too heavy for the two oxen and men transporting the corpse to carry and he is buried in a knoll, this time closer to Arnkell's own farm. A wall so tall that only a bird can fly over it is built around the mound to prevent Þórólfr's further restlessness.<sup>47</sup> This seems to work for a while, but when Arnkell goði is later killed by his enemies, Þórólfr returns to harass the living despite the obstacles.<sup>48</sup>

Þórólfr's activity after his son's death is interesting, especially because Arnkell goði has been killed by the cunning and conspiracy of his enemies. Arnkell himself does not become restless after his death, even though he is not avenged (and thus, in medieval context, has some unresolved issues) since he has no male kinsmen to prosecute the killers, a precondition for a

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<sup>45</sup> See e.g. *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 93–94, 146–47, 150–51, 169; *Grettis saga* (see note 12), 113–16, 118. It could be argued that such people had “lesser minds” since they could not resist the “strong mind” of the deceased, but this would require further studies. I thank Charlotte Vainio for the insight.

<sup>46</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 14, 92.

<sup>47</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 92–95.

<sup>48</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 169.

successful law case in medieval Iceland.<sup>49</sup> He is perhaps kept from becoming restless after death because of his popular personality:<sup>50</sup> though Arnkell's father is a difficult, overbearing man (ójafnaðrmaðr), he himself is rather the opposite, a good man (drengi góðr), who does not share the characteristics of other possible ghost candidates.<sup>51</sup> After Arnkell is killed, his dead father overcomes the physical and ritually constructed boundaries Arnkell had imposed to keep him in his grave, and proceeds to cause further harm to the people. Subsequent to Arnkell's slaying, Þórólfr does have some unresolved issues to deal with, since his son's death has not been properly avenged. It is as if Þórólfr is taking part in the legal procedures of the living, summoning those responsible for his son's death to his own post-mortem court (though no official assembly takes place, just Þórólfr's malicious actions motivated by his son's death).

Þórólfr does succeed in his legal posthumous actions since he manages to take revenge on one of his son's killers. His attacks are first focused on the two farms that once had caused the quarrel between him and Arnkell and that subsequently had been taken over by one of his son's killers, Þóroddr Þorbrandsson. Because of the haunting, Þóroddr is forced to act and he banishes the dead Þórólfr by burning his undecayed body by the sea. Some of the ash flies to the mainland, however, and a cow licks some of it from a stone and then gives birth to a bull that later kills Þóroddr. As soon as it has done this, the bull, which apparently represents the dead Þórólfr,<sup>52</sup> vanishes into a swamp.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 103–04; Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic saga* (see note 18), 133–34.

<sup>50</sup> Compare, however Gunnarr in *Brennu-Njáls saga* (see note 11), 192–95, and the analysis on the episode in Kanerva, “Messages from the Otherworld” (see note 20).

<sup>51</sup> He is, according to *Eyrbyggja saga*, taller, stronger, braver, and more popular than other men, knows the law, and is a wise “chieftain” (goði) with lots of “followers” (þingmenn). *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 20; Meulengracht Sørensen, *Fortælling og ære* (see note 34), 203–206.

<sup>52</sup> The connection between Þórólfr and the bull has been interpreted in various ways. See Ármann Jakobsson, “Íslenskir draugar frá landnámi til lúterstrúar: Innangangur að draugafræðum,” *Skirnir* 184 (2010): 187–210; here 205; Nedkvitne, *Mötet med døden* (see note 16), 40; Vésteinn Ólason, “The Un/Grateful Dead” (see note 10), 166.

<sup>53</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 169–76. In the light of earlier speculation on “lesser minds” as vulnerable to the influence of the dead, it could be suggested that Þóroddr the landowner is considered of lower status compared to Þórólfr since he is killed by the “bull-Þórólfr,” or that his character is somewhat criticized in the saga. I thank Kolfinna Jónatansdóttir for sharing her speculations in this matter.

In this last phase of his restlessness, Þórólfr is clearly seeking justice for his son. His post-mortem function is thus protective, even benevolent, from the perspective of his dead son and his relatives. Þórólfr's restlessness does not necessarily indicate that the rituals performed originally by Arnkell were less powerful than those of Egill, as Þórólfr stays away when Arnkell is present, and after his death, he simply renders a posthumous service to his relatives. This raises questions concerning his earlier restlessness: although harmful to others, has Þórólfr been harmful to his son, and is there a reason why his son's absence has triggered his activity after death? His occasional restlessness while his son and successor as head of the family, Arnkell goði, is away, suggests that Þórólfr is allowed to take part in the dealings of society, whereas Skalla-Grímr is not. Egill's ritualistic contestation of his father's posthumous authority succeeds totally, but Arnkell's rites make it possible for his father to continue to participate in the lives of the living, as long as the deceased father does not contest Arnkell's power, but rather works on his behalf. Þórólfr may thus be looking after his son's interests while he is not in the neighborhood. If this is the case, Arnkell's rituals may have been intended to protect only his own interests, and not those of the local population.

Once Þórólfr's corpse has been moved to its second resting place near Arnkell's farm, a location determined by its own "actions" in becoming too heavy to move elsewhere, it is peaceful until the treacherous killing of Arnkell. When this has occurred it once again acts on Arnkell's behalf. It may be that the "strong mind" of Þórólfr is too powerful for his son to control it permanently with his rituals, but Þórólfr's role as an overseer makes Arnkell's actions somewhat ambiguous. Is he really trying to control his father's posthumous authority and thus protect the people on the district from it? Or is he pretending to do so, or simply neglecting to do so through lack of concern, more worried about protecting his own interests and enhancing his own honor? For some reason he does not use the customary procedures to permanently immobilize the dead. He does not decapitate the body, nor does he burn it himself, both effective methods of disposing of a ghost.<sup>54</sup> Þórólfr is his father, and these procedures might have been considered disrespectful towards him. However, Arnkell does not employ methods similar to those used by Kjartan at Fróðá in the same saga, who banishes his deceased

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<sup>54</sup> Steinsland and Meulengracht Sørensen, *Människor och makter* (see note 33), 87; See also *Flóamanna saga* (see note 12), 255–56, 285; *Grettis saga* (see note 12), 122; *Laxdæla saga* (see note 12), 69.

stepfather<sup>55</sup> and other ghosts that have been harassing his home farm. Kjartan summons them to a “door-court” (*duradómr*), that is, he sentences the ghosts to leave the house in a court session that is held at the door of the house.<sup>56</sup> It is as if Arnkell were unaware of his dead father’s capacities or unwilling to shackle his posthumous power, given that he does not use the procedures available to him.

The restlessness of Þórólfr is also intriguing because Arnkell does not have the motives that ghost-banishers in sagas usually possess. Compared to other ghost-banishers, who, as mentioned above, could have an indeterminate social status, or even one inferior to that which might be expected in the light of their character,<sup>57</sup> Arnkell does not lack the necessary authority, since he is a chieftain (*goði*) and his status is thus higher than that of his father. He has had some disagreements with his father, which would place him in the same category as other ghost-banishers such as *Grettir Ásmundarson* in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* and Þorgils örrabeinsstjúpr (Scarleg’s stepson) Þórðarson in *Flóamanna saga*, but unlike them, Arnkell does not lack social and fatherly support. He does not have any need to renegotiate and improve his social status, as many other ghost-banishers have to.<sup>58</sup>

However, the rituals performed by Arnkell also differ from those of Egill. While Egill buries his father in a faraway place, Arnkell at first fails to do the same and has to move the corpse to a new burial place, further away from Þórólfr’s farm. As usual in the case of witchcraft pointed out in anthropological studies, distance appears to be an important factor in determining the power of the dead: people at a considerable distance from the source are not injured as

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55 The concept “stepfather” is problematic here since the man in question, Þóróddr, is not Kjartan’s real father though he is held as such officially. Informally, in other people’s words, Kjartan is “the son of both Þóróddr and all the others” (*son þeira Þóródds allra saman*), his real father being a man called Björn Breiðvíkingakappi who has had a relationship with Kjartan’s mother when she was already married to Þóróddr. *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 77–79, 106–09.

56 *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 151–52. See also Kanerva, “The Role of the Dead” (see note 21) for the analysis on this episode. On death and the dead and their connection with doors, doorways and doorposts, see also *Laxdæla saga* (see note 12), 39; and the description of a Viking burial by Ibn Fadlan, e.g., in Steinsland and Meulengracht Sørensen, *Människor och makter* (see note 33), 88–89. I thank Sofie Vanherpen for these suggestions.

57 See footnote 20 above.

58 Kanerva, “Messages from the Otherworld” (see note 20); Tulinius, “Framliðnir feður” (see note 10), 299–307.

those in its vicinity are.<sup>59</sup> It is as if the corpses of the malevolent dead possessed a kind of *mana*: a concept indicating evil power present in humans or objects.<sup>60</sup> Egill's father is buried at a faraway point, and because of this stays quiet in his grave, whereas Þórólfr's authority, or perhaps his *mana* inherent in his corpse, succeeds in harming people close to his mound, that is those still inhabiting his farm. The burying of the corpse in the vicinity of Þórólfr's own farm enables the father to continue enacting his authority in the district. Since Egill's rituals suggest that the importance of space was known in medieval Iceland, and given his undoubted authority, Arnkell's failure to bury his father's corpse sufficiently far away appears an act of deliberate negligence, one that ensures Þórólfr's presence in the neighborhood, keeping an eye on the district while Arnkell is absent. Thus the enactment of authority by father and son is mutual and they are both complicit in Þórólfr's use of it, even though Arnkell did not previously comply with Þórólfr's malicious plan to claim back the ownership of a certain woodland from his enemy, Snorri goði.<sup>61</sup>

In *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, the power of a ghost called Kárr inn gamli is used by his son in a similar fashion. The father's restlessness after death has forced the inhabitants to abandon the farms on the island where his son lives and because of this, Þorfinnr Kársson ins gamla, the son, has become a powerful chieftain in the district. When the hero of the saga, Grettir, breaks into Kárr's mound to find treasure and decapitates the cadaver, thus destroying it permanently, Þorfinnr is clearly unhappy, suggesting that he had considered his father's restlessness as positive (even though he has not facilitated this activity himself, but only tolerated it).<sup>62</sup> From a medieval Icelandic perspective, the authority of the deceased could thus be utilized to serve the interests of the living.<sup>63</sup>

Apparently, this is what Arnkell conveys when he performs the death rituals for his father that is before the first phase of Þórólfr's posthumous restlessness.<sup>64</sup>

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59 See e.g. on witchcraft among the Azande by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, abridged with and introduction by Eva Gillies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 12.

60 On *mana* connected to the dead, see Kjartan G. Ottósson, *Fróðárundur* (see note 10), 45–46.

61 *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 90–91.

62 *Grettis saga* (see note 12), 56–61.

63 However, neither in Kárr inn gamli's nor in Þórólfr's case it is indicated that *seiðr* magic would have been used to activate the dead to serve the aims of the living sons. Their role appears to be merely to permit, *not* to invoke the presence of the restless dead corpses of which power in itself is strong enough to render them active.

64 Another factor influencing Arnkell's authority (and thus contrasting this view of Þórólfr acting on his son's permission) could be the status of the dead and its preservation through

Arnkell is supposed to perform this act since he is the son of the deceased and head of the family like Egill; he is supposed to possess the power and authority required for this mission. Moreover, as a *goði*-chieftain he also has the status of a priest in the context of the saga, and the ritual could therefore be considered sacred and an endeavor accomplished for the benefit of the local community, that is, for his many followers.<sup>65</sup> The ritual is communicative; it suggests that the dead father has now been granted a proper rite of passage and is transferred to the afterlife. However, Þórólfr is not reincorporated back into society as a “dead ancestor” by the rituals and his status does not change accordingly. Instead he appears to remain in the liminal space between life and death, as a person dead but still living. The rituals of Arnkell do not serve the social function they are supposed to. Arnkell perhaps performs the rituals so as to secure solidarity with other members of society rather than to effect a change in his father’s status, that is, to transfer him from the world of the living to the land of the dead.<sup>66</sup>

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rituals which Arnkell appears to neglect. It has been pointed out that one reason why the funeral rituals had to be performed in an adequate manner was that the dead would otherwise be refused their due status in the afterlife, John Lindow, *Murder and Vengeance among the Gods: Baldr in Scandinavian Mythology*, Folklore Fellows’ Communications, 262 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1997), 79–80. One indicator of the status of the deceased was the material property that was placed in the grave together with the corpse. At first glance, it seems that Egill’s and Arnkell’s way of reacting to their fathers’ possessions after Skalla-Grímr and Þórólfr have died may affect their posthumous status. Both Egill and Arnkell appear to withhold some of their fathers’ material assets, which ought to have accompanied them to their burial mounds. In *Eyrbyggja saga* it is explicitly stated that after burying his father without any material belongings, “Arnkell rode back to [Þórólfr’s] home farm in Hvammr and took into his possession all the property there, all that his father had owned” (... reið Arnkell heim í Hvamm ok kastaði sinni eign á fé þat allt, er þar stóð saman ok faðir hans hafði átt), *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 92. This suggests that Arnkell kept for himself all the material property of his father and thus denied Þórólfr the status he was due in the afterlife by not placing any of it in Þórólfr’s mound. Similarly, Egill does not place any “movable property” (*lausafé*) in Skalla-Grímr’s mound. *Egils saga* (see note 16), 175. Egill is perhaps being greedy, in that he wants to possess his father’s wealth himself. However, his father has hidden at least some of his property (in a chest, *kista*, and a brass kettle, *eirketill*) just before his death, which might explain why no *lausafé* remains to be placed in the grave. *Egils saga* (see note 16), 174; Matthías Þórðarson, “Um dauða Skalla-Gríms” (see note 29), 106–09. Arnkell thus denies his father his posthumous status, whereas this is not clearly implied in Egill’s actions. This denial could explain the first phase of Þórólfr’s restlessness, as he would be posthumously claiming his property back.

65 Strömbäck, *The Conversion of Iceland* (see note 23), 38–45; *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 20.

66 On rituals, see D. Parkin, “Ritual,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (see note 3), 13368–71.



This would seem to be in accordance with Arnkell being a good man (*drengr góðr*). High-mindedness (*drengskapr*) informed about the ideal values of maleness and femaleness, and *drengr góðr* denoted a man/woman who lived in accordance with these values. The ideal was not, however, a person who could bring justice and equality to others, since according to medieval Icelandic mentality everyone was responsible for him—or herself and his or her own honor and glory, and not that of others.<sup>67</sup> Therefore the protection of others against his father's post-mortem restlessness was not Arnkell's responsibility, as his duty was to himself only. Arnkell's status as a *goði* made no more demands on him than his position as a *drengr góðr*.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, according to the saga, people “thought it was Arnkel[l]’s business to put a stop to it [= the haunting].”<sup>69</sup> In this light Arnkell thus fails to protect the people who look to him to use his power as a chieftain to look after their interests. On the other hand, Arnkell’s willingness to take people suffering from the haunting into his home<sup>70</sup> challenges this interpretation.

## Rituals Weakened by a Curse?

When Þórólfr is interred for the second time, Arnkell does not accomplish this alone but requests help from his rivals, the sons of Þorbrandr, who will later take part in the slaying of Arnkell. Since it is required by law, they agree to help with the burial, but reluctantly.<sup>71</sup> Arnkell thus offers his adversaries the opportunity to participate in controlling his dead father’s authority and does not merely rely on his own power. Moreover, Arnkell’s intentions are at least clear and considerate towards the concerns of the people in the district: he wishes to put an end to the matter since the saga states explicitly that “Arnkell intended to take him [Þórólfr] all the way to Vaðilshöfði [where his own farm was] and bury him there,”<sup>72</sup> indicating that he had hoped to move him to a place closer to his own farm (a place that was under his own control

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<sup>67</sup> Meulengracht Sørensen, *Fortælling og ære* (see note 34), 203–206.

<sup>68</sup> For the power and responsibilities of the *goði*-chieftains in medieval Iceland, see Byock, “Goði” (see note 23).

<sup>69</sup> “[Þ]ótti mönnum Arnkell eiga at ráða boetr á,” *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 94. Trans. by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards in *Penguin Classics: Eyrbyggja saga*, trans. and ed. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (London, New York, et al.: Penguin Books, 1989), 94.

<sup>70</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 94.

<sup>71</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 94–95.

<sup>72</sup> “... Ætlaði Arnkell at fœra hann inn á Vaðilshöfða ok jarða hann þar,” *Eyrbyggja saga*, 95.

which appeared to inhibit effectively his father's posthumous authority) than that where the corpse was actually reburied.

The view of the saga writer appears to be that Þórólfr has troubled Arnkell as well as others with his restlessness, since it states that the sons of Þorbrandr, when asked to help to re-bury the body, were less than enthusiastic about helping to get "Arnkell[!] and his men out of their troubles."<sup>73</sup> All this suggests that something other than Arnkell's own intentions influences the procedures and their results.

Actually, Arnkell may have lost some of his power because he is enacting his rituals under a curse laid on him by a woman skilled in magic, Katla in Holt (í Holti), who, before she was killed with her son by Arnkell and his men for practicing witchcraft, says to Arnkell

... [B]ut I lay this curse on you, that you are allotted worse from your father and will suffer because of him more than Oddr [Kötluson, Katla's son] has suffered because of me. I also expect that before this is over it will be said that you have an evil father.<sup>74</sup>

In medieval Icelandic Family Sagas, the power of the word was irrefutable. Following the ideas of J. L. Austin, as words were uttered in sagas, they simultaneously performed a speech act. People could produce various effects with their words: for instance, they became a prophecy or a curse and functioned accordingly.<sup>75</sup> We may therefore assume that the curse of Katla as it is represented in the saga is an effective one, and that Arnkell *goði* is performing the rituals for his dead father under a malediction, whereas the circumstances that Egill works under are different. The curse might explain why Arnkell's rituals do not function as well as Egill's.

It is also possible that Egill is more "strong-minded" than Arnkell, the *goði*-chieftain, since Egill is powerful enough to move his father's body to its final destination (whereas Arnkell's dead father decides the place himself). Indeed, Egill himself appears to have some magical ability. For instance, in various conflicts with the Norwegian queen Gunnhildr Özurardóttir he uses runes, and

73 "... At leysa vandkvæði Arnkels eða manna hans," *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 94; *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 69), 94.

74 "... En um þat vilda ek at mín ákvæði stæðisk, at þú hlytir því verra af feðr þínum en Oddr hefir af mér hlotit, sem þú hefir meira í hættu en hann; vænti ek ok, at þat sé mælt áðr lýkr, at þú eigir illan föður," *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 54.

75 Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Representation in the Sagas of the Icelanders* (see note 7), 120–24. See J. L. Austin's speech act theory, J. L. Austin, *How to do things with words*, 2nd edition, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

runic letters were attributed supernatural powers in medieval Iceland. His ugly appearance and complicated character resemble those of his father, outer signs which suggest that Egill himself might be a ghost candidate.<sup>76</sup> After his death, Egill is buried by Grímr Svertingsson, who is the husband of Þórðis Þórólfsdóttir Skalla-Grímssonar, daughter of Egill's brother Þórólfr but fostered by Egill, and this is done in a respectful manner: "in good clothes" ("í klæði góð") together with his weapons and garments. His body is later moved and reburied in the church that Grímr has caused to be built after being baptized ("skírðr," literally "purified").<sup>77</sup> Egill's own strong mind is thus pacified by respectful burial practices that apply him with good clothes and weapons in the afterlife, as well as Christianity and Christian men.<sup>78</sup> Suggesting further the strength of Egill's mind is that it is neither explicitly implied in the text that Egill would be anticipating danger from Skalla-Grímr's gaze, as it is not clearly mentioned that he would approach the corpse from behind like Arnkell does. Perhaps Egill's own magical powers aid him in controlling his father's posthumous authority, and he is simply more powerful than Arnkell.

Nevertheless, Þórólfr's appearance as a bull to slay one of Arnkell's killers suggests an element of moral criticism in the story. The main character of the saga, Snorri goði, is listed as one of those responsible for killing Arnkell, but he never has to answer for his act explicitly. Yet the killing of Arnkell is considered a wicked deed in *Eyrbyggja saga*, motivated by the envy of other men, and he is mourned by everyone and mentioned as the most gifted man in pagan times.<sup>79</sup> Right from the beginning of the saga, Arnkell is praised for his "strength of character" ("harðfengi").<sup>80</sup> In other words, Arnkell, if not heroic, is at least a sympathetic character, and killing him is a wicked deed. Being such a remarkable man, Arnkell's death had to be avenged in order to satisfy the medieval Icelandic sense of justice. Perhaps Arnkell himself is prevented from acting posthumously because of the curse of Katla. Another popular man killed by wicked enemies, a noble heathen called Gunnarr Hámundarson, in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, does become posthumously active in order to encourage his son to avenge his death, suggesting that good men

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<sup>76</sup> On magic and runes, see *Egils saga* (see note 16), 109, 171, 229–30. On Egill's character and appearance, see *Egils saga* (see note 12), 143. See also Karen Grimstad, "The Giant as a Heroic Model," *Scandinavian Studies* 48 (1976): 284–98. I thank Sofie Vanherpen for her comments on Egill's personality.

<sup>77</sup> *Egils saga* (see note 12), 296–99.

<sup>78</sup> See footnote 64 above.

<sup>79</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 103.

<sup>80</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 20.

could become restless as well. The dead Gunnarr appears to be expressing the wishes of the community and his close relatives: his mother has clearly indicated that she expects Gunnarr to be avenged, since she does not allow Gunnarr's spear to be buried with him, saying "only he should take it [the spear] who would avenge Gunnarr."<sup>81</sup> No similar desire appears to exist among Arnkell's surviving relatives though his killing is found morally bad. The wish of the living is not strong enough to put the dead Arnkell in action, but powerful enough to activate someone already prone to posthumous activity.

Though the ghosts in sagas do not necessarily participate in actual court sessions,<sup>82</sup> it is arguable that Þórólfr's posthumous activity resembles a legal action. Medieval Icelandic law was based on social interaction, negotiations, compensation, and settlements. Þórólfr as ghost functions similarly: he interacts with the living, and since his appearance is apparently based on unresolved issues, his activities can be considered negotiations that result in a kind of social catharsis (and thus satisfy the medieval Icelandic sense of justice), that is compensation and settlement, in this case the death of one of the killers of Arnkell and disappearance of the bull-shaped "ghost." Conveniently, since the man was killed by a supernatural creature whose power originated in a dead person, there was no obligation to feud.<sup>83</sup> The power of the dead in Þórólfr's case is represented as justified, even if unpleasant in nature.

In this light Þórólfr's peacefulness when Arnkell is present can be interpreted as a sign of respect towards his goði-son, whose character is exceptional in all respects. Arnkell's "strength of character" ("harðfengi") holds Þórólfr inactive in his presence. The rituals of Arnkell are represented as partially ineffective because they were counteracted by witchcraft, but also, especially in the second phase of restlessness, because misdeeds resulting in injustice and social disorder had been done without subsequent settlement and reconciliation. Following from this, the deceased father used his posthumous authority and returned to restore the order that had been disrupted.

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<sup>81</sup> "[Þ]ann einn skyldu á honum taka, er hefna vildi Gunnars," *Brennu-Njáls saga* (see note 11), 192; Kanerva, "Messages from the Otherworld" (see note 20).

<sup>82</sup> However, note that in the doorcourt scene in the *Eyrbyggja saga* (see note 12), 151–52, the dead participate in an actual court session.

<sup>83</sup> On the medieval Icelandic feud culture, see Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (see note 18); William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). On the dead as agents and re-establishers of social order, see Kanerva, "The Role of the Dead" (see note 21).

## Conclusion

In this article, I have studied two cases where the anticipated restlessness of the deceased fathers is prevented or restricted by certain rituals. In medieval Icelandic Family Sagas, some dead people were thought to have “strong minds,” which indicated that they could have posthumous influence over society and the social conventions of the living. Precautions, for instance rituals, could be taken to prevent this.

In the case of Egill, whose skill in magic is implied in the saga, rituals prove to be an effective means of controlling the authority of the dead, whereas Arnkell has only partial success in restraining his father’s posthumous influence. Arnkell’s power to control the authority of the dead is restricted by a curse laid on him by a sorceress, but he also has ambiguous motives. Þórólfr’s prevailing authority seems to serve Arnkell’s interests as well, suggesting that rituals could inhibit the influence of the dead, but also that post-mortem influence could be regulated for the benefit of the living. This might be the case when Arnkell’s father expresses posthumous restlessness for the first time while Arnkell is still alive. Nevertheless, Arnkell’s praiseworthy character and his superior social status make him a person whose presence inactivates all posthumous restlessness. People with inferior status could not control the authority of the dead or escape its serious consequences.

In Arnkell’s case the function of the ghost appears to be moral also: the father returns to the world of the living a second time to avenge his son’s death. The idea behind this seems to be that although the authority of the dead was often malevolent in nature, it was sometimes justified; it could focus attention on social and legal injustices and demand recompense when the living had not settled situations satisfactorily according to the norms of the day.



Albrecht Classen

# **Marco Polo and John Mandeville: The Traveler as Authority Figure, the Real and the Imaginary**

## **Introduction**

If we want to understand fully the complexities of the discourse about authority in the late Middle Ages, let us take a close look at two of the most famous authors of travelogues. Their narratives pivot so essentially on the dividing line between fact and fiction, between accurate, verifiable accounts about personal, practical, experiences on the one hand, and learned traditions, folklore, rumors, gossip, and myths on the other. Marco Polo (1254–1324) traveled to the Mongol Empire in the late thirteenth century (1271–1295) and recorded in great detail all of his experiences, only occasionally digressing into fantasy, especially when he collaborated with the Italian-Provencal writer Rustichello da Pisa in the composition of his *Il Milione*, or *The Travels of Marco Polo*. John Mandeville seems to have been an English knight of St. Albans, who claimed to have embarked on his journey to the East in 1322 and returned in 1356 or 1357. But his identity continues to be debated, with some scholars suggesting that he was Jean de Bourgogne or Jean d'Outremeuse of Liège (1338–1400). There is also a case for attributing the authorship to “anonymous.” Both Polo’s and Mandeville’s travelogues have exerted considerable, or rather, in the latter’s case, tremendous influence, and can be regarded as hallmarks of late medieval travel writing.

Both writers serve us exceedingly well in the exploration of “authority in the Middle Ages,” since both operated intensively with narrative strategies that allowed them to claim scientific, geographic, and personal authority. Both claimed that they had been eye-witnesses, encouraging their readers to believe their travel accounts. While Polo appears to have actually traversed the entire Asian continent on his way to China and back again, Mandeville operated with the concept of learned authority, relating all the monster lore from the past, coupled with his spurious insistence on having seen those monsters with his own eyes. But he created only a fascinating and fanciful account, which easily reveals its literary character, whereas Polo tends to bore his readers, particularly because of the naturalistic dimension of his text. Fiction almost always proves to be more fascinating than factual narrative because it allows the

fanciful to come in and makes it possible for the readers/listeners to imagine new worlds, ideas, conditions, or creatures.

My interest here is specifically focused on the strategies which both authors pursued in their respective texts to provide sufficient evidence confirming the validity of their extraordinary claims. Both were fully aware of the danger inherent in their often rather fanciful accounts; that the audience would not take their words seriously. In their efforts to build a solid case for the trustworthiness of their travelogues about often truly strange and distant lands, both Polo and Mandeville had to be successful in reaching out to their own sponsors, or patrons, but also not to anger them when they preferred to stay neutral.<sup>1</sup>

## Marco Polo's *Il Milione*

Although Marco Polo's account has often been decried as unreliable and fanciful, leading to the general claim that his book contained a "million lies," hence *Il Milione*, the author argued for the very opposite and made the boldest claims in the prologue, assuring all of his readers, including emperors and kings, that he had witnessed all those countries "with his own eyes."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the contributions to *Voyage, quête, pèlerinage dans la littérature et la civilisation médiévales: Actes du colloque organisé par le C.U.E.R.M.A. les 5, 6, 7 mars 1976*, ed. G. Andrieu et al. Sénéfiance, 2 (Aix-en-Provence: Edition CUER MA, 1976), to *Diesseits- und Jenseitsreisen im Mittelalter*, ed. Wolf-Dieter Lange. Studium universale, 14 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1992); to *Reisen und Reiseliteratur im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Xenja von Ertzdorff and Dieter Neukirch with Rudolf Schulz. Chloe, 13 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992); to *Raumerfahrung, Raumerfindung: erzählte Welten des Mittelalters zwischen Orient und Okzident*, ed. Laetitia Rimpau and Peter Ihring (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005); and to *The "Book" of Travels: Genre, Ethnology, and Pilgrimage, 1250–1700*, ed. Palmira Brumett. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 140 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Trans. and with an introd. by Ronald Latham (London: Penguin, 1958), 33. For a critical edition, see Marco Polo, *Le devisement du monde*, édition critique publiée sous la direction de Philippe Ménard. Textes littéraires français, 533, 552, 568, 575 (Geneva: Droz, 2001–2005). There is, of course, a wealth of relevant research literature on Polo, see, for instance, Leonardo Olschki, *L'Asia di Marco Polo: introduzione alla lettura e allo studio del "Milione"*. Biblioteca storica Sansoni, N.S., 30 (Florence: Sansoni, 1957); see now also the contributions to *Convegno su "L'impresa di Marco Polo, cartografia, viaggi, percezione"*, Spoleto, 2005 (Rome: Tiellemmedia, 2007); *Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West*, ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Amilcare Iannucci, with the assistance of John Tulk (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Laurence Bergreen, *Marco Polo: from Venice to Xanadu* (London: Quercus, 2007); Antonio García Espada, *Marco Polo y la Cruzada: Historia de la*



Fully aware, however, that people could question some points in his presentation, he also qualifies this by saying that he tried to make his book as trustworthy as possible, drawing some of his information from other reliable sources: "There is also much here that he has not seen but has heard from men of credit and veracity. We will set down things seen as seen, things heard as heard, so that our book may be an accurate record, free from any sort of fabrication."<sup>3</sup>

We immediately feel surprised at this insistence that he offered only the truth and nothing but the truth, as if he were afraid that his audience might question some aspect of the text because of its exotic nature. The narrator, whether this is now the voice of Rustichello da Pisa or the author/traveler himself, even becomes boastful and states unequivocally that no one in the history of mankind had ever known so much about the world as Polo: "there has been no man ... who has known or explored so many of the various parts of the world and of its great wonders as this same Messer Marco Polo."<sup>4</sup> In order to authenticate this claim, the narrator underscores the traveler's great learning and ability to pick up foreign languages, the skill that gave him access to all the astounding knowledge contained in the book: "I assure you for a fact that before he had been very long at the Great Khan's court he had mastered four languages with their modes of writings."<sup>5</sup>

When particular aspects might seem unbelievable, the narrator resorts to a simple rhetorical trick: "Now let me tell you the simple truth."<sup>6</sup> While all these claims might sound rather dubious, or exaggerated, particularly because they are given in the third person singular, when we turn to Polo's more personal comments we observe an interesting switch in the discourse, which might

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*literatura de viajes a las Indias en el siglo XIV* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, Ediciones de Historia, 2009); John Man, *Xanadu: Marco Polo and Europe's Discovery of the East* (London: Bantam, 2009).

3 "Mais auques il y a choses qu'il ne vit pas, mais il [l] entendi d'ommes certains par verité. Et pour ce, metrons nous les choses veues pour veues, et l'entendue pour entendue, a ce que nostre livre soit vrais et veritables, sanz nule mençonge," Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), 117; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 33.

4 "Ne fu onques hommes de nul[e] generacion qui tant seust ne cerchast des diverses parties du monde comme cestui mesire Marc Pol en sot," Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), 117–18; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 33.

5 "Et sachiez vraiment, il sot en pou de temps de pluseurs langages et sot de .IIII. lettres de lor escriptures," Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), 129; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 40.

6 "Et sachiez sanz faille," Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), 134; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 43.

underscore more than anything else the authenticity and authority of his text. Discussing Armenia, for instance, the author—now surely Polo himself, unless Rustichello continues to use alternative voices—resorts to a very didactic, instructive approach: “Let me begin with Armenia. The truth is that there are actually two Armenias, a Greater and a Lesser.”<sup>7</sup> He makes every possible effort to distinguish and to discriminate as much as possible, commenting, for instance, “On the sea coast lies the town of Ayas, a busy emporium. For you must know that all the spices and cloths from the interior are brought to this town ... .”<sup>8</sup>

If we follow Polo’s description of the location of a country, for instance, we can clearly recognize the map he had in front of him, whether he toured those countries or not: “Lesser Armenia is bounded on the south by the Promised Land, now in the hands of the Saracens; on the north by the western district of Turkey, known as Karaman; on the north-east and east by eastern Turkey, with the towns of Kaisarich and Sivas and many others ... .”<sup>9</sup> When he refers to somewhat questionable information, the author makes quite clear the limits of his own knowledge, resorting to affirmative phrases such as: “In the heart of Greater Armenia is a very high mountain, shaped like a cube, on which Noah’s ark is said to have rested, whence it is called the Mountain of Noah’s Ark.”<sup>10</sup> Or he makes clear that he is drawing information from a book: “This was called the Iron Gates. It is the place where the Alexander Book relates that he shut in the Tartars between two mountains.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, though on a

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7 “Il est voirs que il sont .II. Hermenies, une Grant et une Petite,” Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), 135; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 46.

8 “Encor y a sur la mer une vile qui est apelee Laias, laquelle est de grant marcheandise, car sachiez que toute espicerie et dras de soie et dorez [d’enfra tere] se portent a ceste vile et toutes autres choses,” Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), 136; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 46.

9 Surprisingly, this passage Latham seems to have translated from another manuscript version; at least it is not included in Ménard’s edition; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 46.

10 Again, in the original edited by Ménard we only find: “Et si sachiez que en ceste Grant Ermenie est l’arche de Noé sur une grant Montaigne,” Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), 138; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 48.

11 “Et fu apelee la Porte du Fer; et ce est le lieu que le livre Alixandre conte comment il enclost les Tartars dedenz .II. Montaignes, mais ce ne fu pas voirs que il fussent tartar,” Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), 139; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 49.

slightly different level: “It was in this city, according to local report, that Alexander took to wife the daughter of Darius.”<sup>12</sup>

Ironically, some of the most important aspects of Polo’s account, his accurate description of his own travel experiences, prove to be the most pedestrian, if not boring: “Leaving this city, the traveler proceeds for three days towards the east-north-east, finding fine country all the way, thickly peopled and rich in fruits, grain, and vines.”<sup>13</sup> But then, when he again turns to mountains, in the Middle Ages commonly viewed with great suspicion, fear, and prejudice (and this often for good reasons considering the challenges they posed to all travelers), Polo almost waxes poetic, describing some of them as most beautiful, refreshing, and delightful:

On the mountain tops the air is so pure and so salubrious that if a man living in the cities and houses built in the adjoining valleys falls sick of a fever, whether tertian, quartan, or hectic, he has only to go up into the mountains, and a few days rest will banish the malady and restore him to health. Messer Marco vouches for this from his own experiences.<sup>14</sup>

Marco Polo was not opposed to entertaining his audience, and he probably often included rather fanciful data in his account, but he impresses us most when he tells us of the mundane and trivial, as when he reflects upon his experiences of traversing high mountainous country:

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**12** “En ceste cité prist Alixandre [a] femme la fille Daire, si comme seulz de la vile contentent,” Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), II, 2; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 74.

**13** “Et quant l’en a chevauchieé .III. journees parti de celle cité toutes foitz entre grec et levant, en trouvant moult belles contrees plaines de fruis et habitacions assez et grant marchié de toutes choses et virgnes assez,” Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), II, 3; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 75.

**14** *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 77–78. This passage is not included in Ménard’s edition. Hence see Marco Polo, *Il Milione*, nella edizione di Gioan Battista Ramusio a cura di Renato Giani (Rome: Casa Editrice Carlo Colombo, 1961), 129: “l’aere è così puro in quelle sommità e l’abitarvi così sano, che gli uomini che stanno nella città e nel piano e valli, come si sentano assaltar dalla febbre di ciascuna sorte, o d’altra infermità accidentale, immediate ascendono il monte e stanvi due o tre giorni, e si ritrovano sani per causa dell’eccellenza dell’aere.” For the larger issue, see René Jantzen, *Montagne et symboles* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1988). See also the contributions to *La Montagne dans le texte médiévale: Entre mythe et réalité*. Textes réunis par Claude Thomasset et Danièle James-Raoul. Cultures et Civilisations Médiévales, XIX (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000).

No birds fly here because of the height and the cold. And I assure you that because of this great cold, fire is not so bright here nor of the same colour as elsewhere, and food does not cook well.<sup>15</sup>

Overall, he consistently demonstrates his great concern to be as detailed and factual about the countries that he traversed as possible. Although he does not often explicitly concern himself with the question of his own authority, the soberness with which Polo presents his experiences establishes this very authority by itself. Discussing the high desert world of the province Charchan in Turkestan, he focuses heavily on the hard life of the nomadic population there, regularly on the run from hostile armies, escaping deep into the limitless wasteland, with the wind quickly covering all their traces. When a friendly army traverses their area, they also try to escape them “because they do not want to have their beasts seized and eaten; for the armies never pay for what they take.”<sup>16</sup> Of course, all this could also be hearsay, but Polo does not play here on any monstrous traditions, nor does he seem to exaggerate, and apparently only relates what appears to be concrete and reliable information, and this even when he refers to burial practices, astrologers, and religious rituals that he observed on his travels throughout the Eastern world.<sup>17</sup>

One of the most impressive examples of Polo’s realism and justified claim for his own authority as travel writer occurs when he refers to the salamander. According to ancient and medieval scientific tradition, the comments by Saint Augustine (354–430) or Isidor of Sevilla (560–636), or any of the countless medieval authors of bestiaries, that amphibians can live in fire, or rather, creates the flames, and cools down hot water.<sup>18</sup> Polo, however, clearly distances himself from that concept and corrects the faulty notion, emphasizing:

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<sup>15</sup> “Nul oisel n’y a, pour le haut lieu qu’il y a et froit. Et si vous di que le feu, pour cel grant froit, n’est pas si cler ne de si grant chalour comme en autre lieu ne ne s’i pueent pas si bien cuire les viands,” Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), II, 9; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 80.

<sup>16</sup> The text in Ménard’s edition deviates slightly: “les gens fuient par les chemins avec leur femmes et leur enfans et leur bestail entre le sablon .II. jourz ou .III., la ou il sevent que yaue soit que il puissent vivre avec leur bestes, si que nus ne les puet trouver pour ce qu’il sevent couvrir les voies la ou il sont alé par le sablon,” Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), II, 14; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 83.

<sup>17</sup> *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 86–87.

<sup>18</sup> Ann Payne, *Medieval Beasts* (London: British Library, 1990); Werner Telesko, *The Wisdom of Nature: The Healing Powers and Symbolism of Plants and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Munich and New York: Prestel, 2001); Willene B. Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts: The Second-Family Bestiary. Commentary, Art, Text and Translation* (Woodbridge, UK, and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2006); see also: <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast276.htm> (last accessed on June 21, 2012).

"I will now tell you the real facts. First, let me explain that I had a Turkish companion named Zurficar ... My companion told me the true facts and I have also seen them for myself. When the stuff found in this vein of which you have heard has been dug out of the mountain and crumbled into bits, the particles cohere and form fibres like wool ... The account I have given you of the salamander is the truth, and all the other accounts that are put about are lies and fables."<sup>19</sup>

This does not mean that Polo refrains from any attempts to embellish his account with reports that challenge our credulity, although even then he insists on his absolutely trustworthy authority. These include references to the mythical Prester John<sup>20</sup> or to the miraculous accomplishments of the enchanters. Writing of the latter, to secure his own position as a travelogue author who can be trusted, he insists: "What I have told you is the plain truth without a word of falsehood. And those who are skilled in necromancy will confirm that it is perfectly feasible,"<sup>21</sup> He might indeed have observed some of those phenomena, but his own insistence on the veracity of his report

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19 "Et si sachiez [qu'en] ceste montaigne on trueve une vaine de laquele on fait le salemondre. Et sachiez de voir que la salemondre n'est pas beste c'on dit en no pays, mais est vaine de terre, et orrez comment ... Or avoit mesire Marc Pol un compaignon qui avoit a non Susitar et estoit moult sages, et conta le dit Turc a mesire Marc Pol comment il avoit demouré en ceste contree .III. anz ... Et dist que l'en fait caver en ces montaignes et y trueve on une vaine et on prent cele vaine et se l'amenuise l'en et trueve l'en dedenz aussi comme filé de laine, et puis le met on sechier. Et quant elle est seche, si se pourrit dedenz grant mortirs de fer ... . Et ainsi est la verité de la salemandre, non autrement. Et cil meïsmes de la contree le conterent en ceste maniere, car qui le diroit autrement ... ce seroit bourde et fable," Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), II, 20–21; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 89–90. John Larner, *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), offers an impressive analysis of Polo's deep impact on European perceptions of the East and of the authenticity of his account.

20 *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 106; *La lettre du Prêtre Jean: Les versions en ancien français et en ancien Occitan, textes et commentaires*, ed. Martin Gosman. Mediaevalia Groningana, 2 (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1982); Jacqueline Pirenne, *La légende du "Prêtre Jan"* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 1992); Bettina Wagner, *Die "Epistola presbiteri Johannis": Lateinisch und deutsch. Überlieferung, Textgeschichte, Rezeption und Übertragung im Mittelalter, mit bisher unedierte Texten*. Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 115 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000).

21 "Et c'est voirs sans nule mensonge, quar biens vous en diront li sage de nostre pays qui sevent de nigromancie que il se puet bien faire," Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), II, 47; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 110. For parallel questions pertaining to narrative authority in the Middle Ages, see Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 20 (1994; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

indicates how much he himself felt insecure about it and uncertain that his audience would believe him.

Polo's account has much to say of the world of the Khan, and we do not need to question further here whether he is telling us the truth or not. He assumes, however, throughout his account, the position of complete authority and backs it up with so many details that little prevents us from believing his vast storehouse of comments. Another good example, not connected with the court, confirms the degree to which Polo made an effort to establish his authority by being as realistic and careful in his discussions as possible. He observed, for instance, an unusual burning material in the Far East: "It is a fact that throughout the province of Cathay there is a sort of black stone, which is dug out of veins in the hillsides and burns like logs. These stones keep a fire going better than wood. I assure you that, if you put them on the fire in the evening and see that they are well alight, they will continue to burn all night, so that you will find them still glowing in the morning."<sup>22</sup> Of course, he is dealing with bituminous coal, unfamiliar at that time to Europeans, who were just beginning to experiment with it as a source of energy.<sup>23</sup>

Most important for our topic, however, proves to be the author's delicate reflections upon the value of these stones, because he also noticed the culture and enormous popularity of bathing in China, which requires huge amounts of burning material. This allows him to inject, once again, his mercantile perspective, which, although mundane in the larger context, reconfirms his successful strategy for maintaining his authority: "So these stones, being very plentiful and very cheap, effect a great saving of wood."<sup>24</sup>

A final example might suffice to give us a great sense of how Polo operates with traditional authority and simply replaces it with his own, presenting an accurate account of animals, objects, and people as he observed them in the

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<sup>22</sup> "Il est voirs que par tout la province du Catay a une maniere de pierre noire qui se cave de montaignes comme vaine, laquele art aussi comme fait buche et maintient mieulz le feu que ne fait la buche. Car, se vous le metez la nuit ou feu, vous trouverez le matin du feu, si que il sont si bonnes que par toute la prouvince n'ardent autre chose," Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), III, 106; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 156.

<sup>23</sup> Jörg Wiesemann, *Steinkohlen-Bergbau in den Territorien um Aachen, 1334–1794*. Aachener Studien zur älteren Energiegeschichte, 3, 4 (Aachen: Alano, 1995); Horst Kranz, "Nutzung von Steinkohle im Mittelalter," *Economia e energia secc. XIII–XVIII: Atti della Trenta-quattresima Settimana di Studi, 15–19 aprile 2002*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi. Atti delle Settimane di Studi e altri Convegni, 34 (Florence: Le Monnier, 2003), 423–43.

<sup>24</sup> "Bien est voir que il ont buche assez, mais point n'en ardent pour ce que les pierres valent mieulz et coustent mainz que ne fait la buche," Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), III, 106; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 157.

Far East. One of the great mythical beasts so commonly discussed in the Middle Ages was the unicorn.<sup>25</sup> Polo witnessed that animal, however, and debunks the myth in a most resolute manner:

They have wild elephants and plenty of unicorns, which are scarcely smaller than elephants. They have the hair of a buffalo and feet like an elephant's. They have a single large, black horn in the middle of the forehead. They do not attack with their horn, but only with their tongue and their knees; for their tongues are furnished with long, sharp spines ... They have a head like a wild boar's and always carry it stooped forwards to the ground. They prefer to spend their time wallowing in mud and slime. They are very ugly brutes to look at.<sup>26</sup>

If that were not enough to horrify his European readers, Polo then goes one step further and destroys any illusion anyone might still have had about the beautiful unicorn, commonly symbolizing Christ: "They are not at all as we describe them when we relate that they let themselves be captured by virgins, but clean contrary to our notions."<sup>27</sup>

In short, Polo never refers to any mythical monsters as real and almost completely refrains from truly fictional ornamentation of his account to comply with contemporary expectations. He might exaggerate his account from time to time, and he certainly orientalized Cathay/China in order to create a narrative foil by which he could criticize implicitly the European countries for their own shortcomings. Overall, however, we encounter in Polo a writer who maintains his authority as the author of an extraordinary travelogue, and solidifies it at each and every step of his account by being as accurate and detailed as possible, by demonstrating a sharp critical eye, and by refusing to submit to traditional concepts and notions for their own sake when he could observe just the opposite in many cases.<sup>28</sup> As Philippe Ménard

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<sup>25</sup> Rüdiger Robert Beer, *Unicorn: Myth and Reality*, trans. Charles M. Stern (London: Ash and Grant, 1977).

<sup>26</sup> "Il ont olifans assez et si ont aussi unicornes qui ne sont gueres mains que les olifans de grandesce. Il sont si faites: quar il ont tout le poil comme le bugle et les piez comme olifanz et si a une corne noire enmi le front moult grosse et ne fait nul mal de sa corne mais de sa langue, car il a sus sa langue espines moult longues, et si a la teste comme sengler et porte touz jourz sa teste encline vers terre. Il demeure volentiers entre lacs et [pantains]. Elle est moult laide beste a veoir," Ménard, *Le devisement du monde* (see note 2), VI,17; *Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Latham (see note 2), 253.

<sup>27</sup> "Elle n'est pas si faite, comme nous disons en ce paÿs, qu'elle se prent au sain d'une pucelle virge, mais c'est tout le contraire," *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> For further discussions of *auctoritas* in the Middle Ages, see the contributions to *Ad litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, ed. Mark D. Jordan and Kent Emery, Jr. (Notre

emphasizes, “Marco Polo does not only pay attention to the products from the soil and the artisans, but also to the unique ethnographic features, to the belief in magic and religious approaches, and to the rituals that accompany the sick and death.”<sup>29</sup>

## John Mandeville’s *Travels*

Inevitably we must next turn to John Mandeville’s *Travels* (published many times since 1356), one of the bestsellers and most popular texts of the entire Middle Ages, in order to compare and contrast the approaches utilized there. Mandeville and Polo are like a literary pair, each representing one side of the same coin, that is, the exploration of the East, though the first in all likelihood actually traveled to China and back, while the latter was most probably nothing but an armchair traveler. Scholars have long debated who this Mandeville might have been, and how much of his account can be trusted, if any of it at all. For us this represents an ideal case to probe further how authority was negotiated within the genre of travel writing. Apparently Mandeville had no concerns regarding his authority and the authenticity of his report, as he states quite bluntly in the prologue: “I, John Mandeville, knight, although I am unworthy, ... passed the sea the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ 1332, on Michaelmas Day, and since have been a long time overseas, and have seen and gone through many kingdoms ... .”<sup>30</sup> Addressing his audience

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Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1992). For solid confirmation of the veracity of Polo’s account, see John Larner, *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); see also the contributions to *Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West*, ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Amilcare Iannucci with John Tulk (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), and especially Longxi Zhang, “Marco Polo, Chinese Cultural Identity, and an Alternative Model of East-West Encounter,” 280–96.

**29** “Marco Polo est attentif non seulement aux produits du sol et de l’artisanat, mais aussi aux singularités ethnologiques, aux croyances magiques et religieuses, aux rites qui accompagnent les maladies et la mort,” Philippe Ménard, “Preface” to vol. 4 (2005, see note 2), 8.

**30** *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. with an introd. by C. W. R. D. Moseley (London: Penguin, 2005), 44. There are, of course, many different versions and hence critical editions. Here I rely for the early part on *The Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson. Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), based on the so-called Defective Version, as represented by the manuscript housed in the British Library, Ms. Royal 17 C. xxxviii: “John Maundevyle kyght, thow Y be nought worthi, that was bore in Engelond in the toun of Seynt Albones and passed the see in the yer of the Incarnacioun of Oure Lord Jhesu Crist 1332 uppon Seynt Michelis day. And sithe hiderward have Y be long tyme over the see, and have Y seye and go thorgh many londes, and Y leygh in many provinces



directly, he emphasizes how much they can trust his descriptions “for I have many times travelled and ridden over it [the Holy Land] in goodly company of lords.”<sup>31</sup> There is a strong likelihood that here we are dealing with an armchair traveler who had available an excellent library of relevant books and maps, including Marco Polo’s account. C. W. R. D. Moseley formulates it most poignantly when he observes:

He deliberately integrates material of very different kinds not readily to be found elsewhere; but unlike the compendium writer ... he does not just compile. One of his most remarkable and interesting achievements is to have synthesized so many sources so that the joins do not show. He adapts and shapes to fit his plan, unifying all with the stamp of valuing subjectivity.<sup>32</sup>

The very fact that Mandeville knows how to list virtually every country that the traveler has to traverse on his way to the Holy Land, whatever route s/he might take through Europe and the Middle East, demonstrates how much encyclopedic knowledge is derived from relevant sources in his personal library. Unsurprisingly, he knows even tidbits of information, such as the origin of the River Danube in (southwestern) Germany. Referring to some of the holiest relics, the author plainly states what the future traveler ought to know and do: “At Constantinople is the sponge and reed with which the Jews gave drink to Our Lord when He hung upon the Cross.” He continues: “And you must understand that the Cross of Our Lord was made of four kinds of trees, as it is contained in the verse written

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and kyndomes.” For the additional manuscript, see *The Bodleian Version of Mandeville’s Travels*, ed. M. C. Seymour. Early English Text Society, 253 (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1963). See also *The Book of John Mandeville: an Edition of the Pynson Text with Commentary on the Defective Version*, ed. Tamarah Kohanski. Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 231 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001); *The Defective Version of Mandeville’s Travels*, ed. M. C. Seymour. Early English Text Society O.S., 319 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

**31** “For Y have many tymes y[passid and ryden to Jerusalem in company of greet lordes and other good companye,” *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Kohanski and Benson (see note 30), 23; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 45.

**32** Moseley, “Introduction” (see note 30), 13–14. See also Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1988); Iain McLeod Higgins, *Writing East: The “Travels” of Sir John Mandeville*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); *Jean de Mandeville in Europa: Neue Perspektiven in der Reiseliteraturforschung*, ed. Ernst Bremer et al. Mittelalter Studien des Instituts zur Interdisziplinären Erforschung des Mittelalters und seines Nachwirkens, 12 (Paderborn and Munich: Fink, 2007).

here.”<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, it does not matter to him whether he can verify a report or not; he simply lists whatever details seem to be relevant and which he himself has come across in his reading, without saying so explicitly: “Men of Greece and other Christian men too who dwell beyond the sea say that the wood of the Cross that we call cypress was of the tree Adam ate the apple from.”<sup>34</sup>

In fact, we might have better luck in analyzing Mandeville’s approach if we forget any notion of him as an eye-witness and simply regard him as the author of a travel book based on a whole library of relevant studies. Seen in that light, it would make sense that he thoroughly enjoys so much the inclusion of historical references: “And further up towards the sea, on this same stretch of water, used to stand the city of Troy; but that city was destroyed by the Greeks.”<sup>35</sup> Past and present intermingle, and so does the religious with the factual, the normal with the monstrous, just as Mandeville, in his function of entertainer of his reading audience, saw fit.

Considering this approach, we also begin to understand the purpose of repeatedly including purely literary elements, such as those of the dragon lady whom no man dared to kiss, without this liberating gesture destined to live until the end of time in that beastly form: “And from that time on no knight has been able to see her without dying soon afterwards. But when a knight comes who is bold enough to dare to kiss her, he shall not die, but he shall turn that damsel into her proper shape, and he shall be lord of her and of the islands.”<sup>36</sup> Any well-informed reader would have recognized traces of the *Melusine* material here *avant la lettre* (unless Mandeville resorted to the report by Walter Map), skillfully woven into the tapestry of travelogue, religious

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33 “At Constantynople ther is the sponge and the reed of the which the Jewes gaf Oure Lorde to drynke galle uppon the Croys ... And ye shal understonde that the Croys of Our Lord was imakyd of foure maner of trees, and hit is conteyned in this verse,” *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Kohanski and Benson (see note 30), 24; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 46.

34 “As Grekes and Cristin men that dwelleth over the see seyn, that the tre of the Cros that we callen cipresse was of the tree that Adam eet of the apple,” *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Kohanski and Benson (see note 30), 25; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 47. This line, for instance, is not extant in the Bodleian ms. version.

35 “And upwarde to the see uppon the water was y-woned to be the geet cité of Troye in a ful fair playn, but that cité was destroyed with men of Grece,” *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Kohanski and Benson (see note 30), 26; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 49.

36 “And sithen hiderward myght no knyght so hure but he deyde anoon. But when a knyght cometh that is so hardy to kysse hure mouth, he shal turne that damysel to hure owen shappe, and be lord of the contré byforeseyd,” *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Kohanski and Benson (see note 30), 30; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 54.

pilgrimage account, and tale of extraordinary adventures.<sup>37</sup> But we have hardly caught our breath, when Mandeville plunges into highly specific data concerning travel distances, which lends his voice considerable authority once again: “From Rhodes to Cyprus is near five hundred miles; but a man may journey to Cyprus and not touch at Rhodes. Cyprus is a fine island, and a big one; there are many good cities, but principally four.”<sup>38</sup> Such reports he then cleverly combines with historical references as they have been told to him, or, rather, which he had read in some of his sources: “And eight miles from Tyre on the coast is the city of Saphon, or Sarepte, towards the east. The prophet Helyas used to dwell there, and there the Lord Jesus raised the widow’s son from the dead.”<sup>39</sup>

The problem with Mandeville, at least from our perspective, investigating the meaning of authority in the Middle Ages (here meaning the narrative voice), begins to rear its head when he moves from serving as a mouthpiece of many previous sources, summarizing their facts, or factoids, and dares to claim that he derived his information from his own travels. This in turn justifies his including imaginary creatures, monsters, and accounts of strange phenomena in an ever more fanciful manner, that is, when he begins to orientalize the Orient, making it as exotic as possible for literary purposes: “In that castle there are always more than eight thousand men, to guard the castle and to serve the Sultan, and they are maintained in all their needs by the Sultan. I should know the organization of his court pretty well, for I lived for a long time with the Sultan and was a soldier with him in his wars against the Bedoynes.”<sup>40</sup>

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37 Much has been written on this literary motif, and the *Stoff* itself has attracted much attention by late-medieval writers; now see Claudia Steinkämper, *Melusine—vom Schlangenweib zur “Beauté mit dem Fischschwanz”*: *Geschichte einer literarischen Aneignung*. Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 233 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

38 “And fro Rodes to Cipre is neyr five hundred myle. But men may go to Cipre, and come nought at Rodes. Cipre is a good ile and a greet, and ther beth many good citeis,” *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Kohanski and Benson (see note 30), 31. The last subordinate clause is missing here. *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 55.

39 “Uppon that see is the Saphen, Sarepte, or Sydonis, ther was woned to dwelle Helias the prophete. And there rayسد Jonas the prophete the wydew sone,” *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Kohanski and Benson (see note 30), 32; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 56. Note the difference between the original in the Defective manuscript and the modern English translation.

40 “In that castel is dwellyng allway, to kepe hit and to serve the soudan, more then 8000 persones of folk, whoch taketh alle the necessaries of the soudan. For this is y-knowe wel, for Y dwelled in his courte, and was soudier, and in his werris a greet while agenst the Bedoyns,” *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. Kohanski and Benson (see note 30), 33; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 59.

Before he embarks on his most imaginative accounts, Mandeville also introduces a most intelligent trick to legitimize his own account, whereby he gains, in a way, the necessary, at least literary, authority to go on reporting the strange countries and creatures on the Asian continent. He simply admits that he cannot verify some aspect because he was not an eyewitness. After having referred to a strange fruit—"Some men say that balm grows in Greater India, in the desert where the Trees of the Sun and Moon spoke to Alexander the Great"—he suddenly injects: "But I have not seen that place because of the dangerous ways to it, and so I cannot tell the truth of this."<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, he even warns his readers not to trust anyone naively when they are offered such balm: "And you should understand that men can easily be deceived in buying balm unless they have good understanding of the matter."<sup>42</sup> Ironically, as soon as Mandeville has established his authority once again, he turns to the Biblical story of Joseph and connects it with some spurious tourist site, Joseph's barns, "which still exist in Egypt beyond the River Nile."<sup>43</sup> The author reveals, however, that he is only relating what others have informed him about, as contradictory as their opinions might be, since the debate continues as to whether those buildings used to be tombs, which Mandeville doubts, or the barns of Joseph: "it is not likely that they are tombs, since they are empty inside and have porches and gates in front of them. And tombs ought not, in reason, to be so high."<sup>44</sup>

This is not an eye-witness account, but an attempt to come to terms with conflicting information, so he establishes his authority in this case through a

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<sup>41</sup> This entire section dealing with Egypt is missing in the Defective manuscript, but it is contained in the Egerton manuscript, which Moseley used for his translation. This one was edited by Malcolm Letts, *Mandeville Travels: Texts and Translations*. 2 vols. Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society. Second Series, CI (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1953). He has slightly intervened in the text, adding to old and obsolete words modern equivalents in square brackets. Names for people and places are modernized: "Some men say that there grows balm in India the more, in the desert where the trees of the sun and moon spake til great Alexander. But that place have I not seen because of the perilouos ways theretil, and therefore I can tell no sooth thereof," *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 37; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 66.

<sup>42</sup> "And ye shall understand that men may lightly be beguiled in the buying of balm, but if they have the better cunning therein," *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 37; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 66.

<sup>43</sup> "That are yet in Egypt beyond the water of Nilus," *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 38; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 66.

<sup>44</sup> "It is not likely that they should be graves, in als mickle as they are void within and have porches before them and gates. And also graves should not by reason be so high," *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41); *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 66.

somewhat dubious evaluation of the evidence. Another interesting example of this strategy can be observed in his discussion of the Red Sea. Whereas some people have argued that the name is derived from the water there being red, he retorts with the surprisingly logical observation: "The water of that sea is no redder than other seawater anywhere else; but because there is much red gravel on the shore of that sea, it is called the Red Sea."<sup>45</sup> We cannot tell how he is supposed to have reached that conclusion, since he does not claim to have visited the Red Sea. Of course, that is always implied through the context, but here and in many other passages he does not say so, offering only critical opinions that sometimes make good sense, especially when he appears to copy from other learned literature. At other times, he merely reflect his imaginative mind or his utter credulity with respect to miracle accounts, which he takes at face value. For instance, the olive oil which the monks of the St. Catherine's monastery have available is allegedly produced by them from the olives delivered by huge flocks of birds, which come to that location as if on a pilgrimage. Therefore, Mandeville suggests to his readers: "Now since birds, which have no reason, do such reverence to that glorious virgin, we Christian men certainly ought to visit that holy place with great devotion."<sup>46</sup>

We need to keep the broad medieval mentality in mind to understand the author's approach. Any pilgrimage account is predicated on a strong belief system that does not question any miraculous or religious claims. Mandeville meets a significant demand of his time, and skillfully combines Christian themes with precise geographic information so as to maintain the interest in his text, both for the devout and the curious. Without stating each and every time whether he saw the specific locations himself, or whether he actually traveled, which is, of course, the premise of the entire text, Mandeville takes his audience directly to the relevant spots and describes them in such detail that it seems absurd to deny that he had been there himself. For instance:

From Hebron men go to Bethlehem in half a day, for it is only five miles. The way is pleasant and good, through a plain and a wood. Bethlehem is only a little city, long and narrow, and

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<sup>45</sup> "The water of that sea is no redder than other water is of the sea elsewhere; but, for there is mickle red gravel by the coast of the sea, therefore men call it the Red Sea," *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 42; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 69.

<sup>46</sup> "Now, since it is so that fowls that no reason can, do such reverence to that glorious virgin, well ought us Christian men to visit that holy place with great devotion," *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 42; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 70.

well walled and moated ... Towards the east end of that city is a fine church with many ramparts and towers, well walled on all sides.<sup>47</sup>

So there is no reason to doubt him here at all, which provides him with the very authority that he subsequently utilizes to support the claims about the monstrous East. Amazingly, Mandeville knows extremely well how to avoid any possible criticism by raising the most critical questions himself and answering them satisfactorily, which forces the readers/listeners to pay complete respect to him as a trustworthy source. He reports about the miraculous phenomenon of the Dead Sea, where even iron, on being thrown into the water, “rises again and floats on top.”<sup>48</sup> But then he relates that “if a feather is thrown in, it sinks.”<sup>49</sup> This does not make sense, he then concludes, inserting himself as the harshest critic, so it seems: “And that is against nature.”<sup>50</sup>

However, for him this explains why the sinful cities in Biblical times went under as the result of God’s punishment. The most unlikely suddenly appears most likely because of divine intervention. Consequently, Mandeville does not need to verify anything any further, because the material journey turns into a spiritual one, whether he actually went to the East or not. In light of this we can understand the central strategy pursued by him, because he has established himself as the highest authority, claiming a status both as eye-witness and as an interpreter of God’s miracles here on earth:

By the side of this sea grow trees that bear apples fine of color and delightful to look at; but when they are broken or cut, only ashes and dust and cinders are found inside, as a token of the vengeance that Good took on those five cities and the countryside round about, burning them with the fires of Hell.<sup>51</sup>

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**47** “From Ebron men goth to Bethleem on half a day, for hit is but 5 myle bytwyne, and hit is a perlouous way and thorgh wodes ryght lykyng. But Bedlem is right a lykyng cité and lytle, but hit is long and marwe and wel y-walled and enclosid with dych ... Toward the ende of that cité toward the est is a fair cherk and a gracious, and hit hath many toures and many pynacles and corneld ful strongly,” *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 35–56; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 74.

**48** “Hit cometh up agen,” *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 45; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 89.

**49** “If eny men casteth fetheris therynne, hit sinketh adoun to gronde,” *ibid.*

**50** “And that is agen kynde,” *ibid.*

**51** “And ther now groweth trees and berith fruyt of fair colour and semeth rype, but thorgh venaunce of God that cité was brent with fire of Helle,” *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 46; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 90.

Later Mandeville resorts to his previous strategy once again, differentiating between information that he had learned himself while traveling and that which represents only hearsay. Talking about the various possible routes to the Holy Land, he briefly comments about the Baltic and Russian regions:

But I never followed that route to Jerusalem, and so I cannot talk about it. I have heard that people cannot easily go that way in winter because of the rivers and the marshes that are there which cannot be crossed unless there is a good hard frost with snow.<sup>52</sup>

So, can we trust Mandeville as an authority about the world of the East, the Holy Land, the pilgrimage sites, his discussions about the Koran or Islam at large, his personal contacts with the Sultan, and the latter's serious criticism of the moral malaise in the West? All the rhetorical devices necessary for the desired authentication are present, and he certainly pretends to speak from the point of view of an eye-witness, as when he emphasizes: "it behooves a man who wants to see wonders sometimes to go out of his way."<sup>53</sup> Did he, then, follow his own advice and travel to those exotic lands? Did he actually encounter those monsters in Ethiopia? "There are some who have only one foot, and yet they run so fast on that one foot that it is a marvel to see them. That foot is so big that it will cover and shade all the body from the sun."<sup>54</sup>

How should we evaluate his many remarks about people's customs, about properties of gems and their power to verify a person's level of morality, or

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<sup>52</sup> Here we must draw from the Egerton manuscript once again: "But I went never by that way to Jerusalem, and therefore I may not well tell it. For, as I have understood, men may not well go that way but in winter for waters and marshes that are there, which a man may not pass, but if he have right hard frost and that it be well snowing above," *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 92; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 103.

<sup>53</sup> "But he that will see such marvels, him behoves some time thus wend out of the way," *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 105; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 113. Letts observes that the Cotton ms. omits this important sentence, *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 99. The Paris ms. offers the following wording: "ce nest mie le droit chemin pour aler aus parties que iay ia nommees," *ibid.*, 105, note 2.

<sup>54</sup> "For there are some that have but a [one] foot; and they will run so fast upon that one foot that it is wonder to see. And that ilk foot is so mickle that it will cover and ombre all his body for the sun," *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 113; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 118. Cf. Lisa Verner, *The Epistemology of the Monstrous in the Middle Ages*. Studies in Medieval History and Culture, 33 (New York: Routledge, 2005); Sarah Salih, "Idols and Simulacra: Paganity, Hybridity and Representation in Mandeville's Travels," *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 113–33.



about the fountain of youth that he allegedly saw with his own eyes?<sup>55</sup> The more he insists on the veracity of his account the more we must doubt it, even though he goes so far as to claim at the end of his work that he is “a man worn out by age and travel and the feebleness of my body.”<sup>56</sup> Even the pope, to whom he had allegedly submitted his travelogue, had confirmed the truth in everything he had said:

For he said he had a book in Latin that contained all these things and much more, after which book the *Mappa Mundi* has been made; and he showed me that book. And so our Holy Father the Pope has ratified and supported my book in all points.<sup>57</sup>

To search for possible elements of truth or for historical, cultural, religious, and anthropological facts in *The Travels* fails to grasp the narrative essence of this text and constitutes a positivistic self-deception and an ignorance of the nature of medieval travelogues at large. Mandeville was certainly a learned author, who skillfully wove together an impressive tapestry of literary and scientific elements that gained him a huge popularity for centuries to come. This popularity was grounded in the author's remarkable ability to claim authority where he probably had none, and to appeal to his audience's insatiable hunger for exciting reports about the mysterious East, for specific instructions how to get to the Holy Land and what to see there, and all this richly peppered with references to classical figures such as Alexander the Great, to events and people in the Old and the New Testament, about sexual practices among other peoples, unusual gender relationships, variant eating and clothing habits, and so on.

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<sup>55</sup> *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 119, 123.

<sup>56</sup> “And now am come to rest, as man discomfited for age and travail and feebleness of body,” *Mandeville Travels*, ed. Letts (see note 41), 222; *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (see note 30), 189.

<sup>57</sup> “For he said that he had a book of Latin that contained all that and mickle more, after which book the *Mappa Mundi* is made; and that book he showed to me. And therefore our holy father the Pope has ratified and confirmed my book in all points,” *ibid.* There is no doubt about the artificiality and fictional nature of this final section, as C. W. R. D. Moseley, “Sir John Mandeville's Visit to the Pope: The Implications of an Interpolation,” *Neophilologus* 54 (1970): 77–80, has confirmed. One wonders, however, about the perceived need to verify or falsify any of Mandeville's claims. See now Frank Palmieri, “Conjectural History and Satire: Narrative as Historical Argument from Mandeville to Malthus (and Foucault),” *Narrative* 14.1 (2006): 64–84; Fabienne L. Michelet, “Reading and Writing the East in Mandeville's Travels,” *Wissen über Grenzen: Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, ed. Andreas Speer. *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, 33 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 282–302.



Undoubtedly, Mandeville excelled, above all, in culling his information from a vast library, and combined it all with his claim of authenticity.<sup>58</sup> He thus positioned himself most successfully as a master authority figure who commanded a variety of discourses: the religious expert, the travel authority, the eye-witness of foreign lands, the historian, and the anthropologist. We might consider his *Travels* in this sense as the ultimate triumph of medieval efforts to establish authority. Whereas most other writers—excepting the entire field of encyclopedists—limited themselves to one area of authority, Mandeville claimed them all, and he could uphold that claim well because he was so unabashed in making it. Little wonder that his *Travels* enjoyed enormous popularity far into the early modern age, as documented by the fact that the text was translated into seven different languages and has survived in large numbers of manuscript copies and early modern prints. As Iain Higgins underscores, “*The Book of John Mandeville* is one of the few medieval works to have had an almost continuous readership since it was first composed.”<sup>59</sup> In this work we have encountered one of the most authoritative voices of the Middle Ages regarding travel experiences.

## Conclusion

Marco Polo claimed authority in his prose narrative simply because he had actually traveled to the East and felt a powerful urge to relay to his audience what he had actually witnessed on his journey. In a way, we could identify Polo as one of the founders of empirical scholarship, as a trustworthy source relevant for anthropological, geographical, botanical, and cultural-historical research. There is no doubt, of course, that he also embellished and expanded his account to make it more palatable for the larger audience. Nevertheless, it is his own authority that carries the weight of the entire report, since he refers to the testimony of his own observations, and since he carefully weighs and balances the data. Similarly, though still quite distinctly, John Mandeville

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58 Simon Gaunt, “Translating the Diversity of the Middle Ages: Marco Polo and John Mandeville as ‘French’ Writers,” *Australian Journal of French Studies* 46 (2009): 235–48.

59 Iain Higgins, “Mandeville’s *Travels*,” *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. John Block Friedman et al. (New York and London: Garland, 2000), 357–60; here 360. For the German history of reception, see Klaus Ridder, *Jean de Mandevilles “Reisen”: Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der deutschen Übersetzung des Otto von Diemerungen*. Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 99 (Munich and Zurich: Artemis, 1991).

operated with the loudest voice of authority, with his entire library backing up his claims of having been an eye-witness. Perhaps not surprisingly, at those very moments when he discussed the most fanciful aspects, objects, or creatures, he insisted most strongly on his own authority, his learnedness, and, above all, his status as an eye-witness. Ironically, it is at these very moments that modern scholarship identifies him clearly as lacking any serious authority.

Authority, however, is not necessarily predicated on facts or on concrete and realistic specifics. Authority also has much to do with aura and charisma, with personal influence and rhetorical skills. Polo and Mandeville differed in their approaches to authority, to the point that they were almost diametrically opposed, and thus their texts serve as impressive examples for us today to grasp the wide-ranging discourse on authority in the late Middle Ages, at a time when empirical science tentatively insisted began to raise its head and insisted on its own authority. To use an analogy, Polo would be the modern-day defender of evolutionary sciences, while Mandeville would represent the fantasy (not even theory) of “Intelligent Design.” The former established his authority through his own experiences, however exaggerated and filtered through the literary lens provided by Rustichello da Pisa, while the latter resorted to his library as well as the vast body of (supposedly) learned authorities in order to support his own claim.

Alexandra F. Vukovich

# Motherhood as Authority in the *Life of Queen Helen* by Archbishop Daniel II

## Introduction

When Uros I (1243–1276) succeeded King Vladislav of Serbia (1234–1243), a period of internecine conflict (begun in 1196 with the abdication of the founder of the Nemanjid Dynasty, Stephen-Nemanja, ca. 1167–1199) drew to a close. During his reign, Uros I sought to secure the expansion of his kingdom against the Kingdom of Hungary and to integrate the territory of Hum. The marriage between Uros I and Helen (or Jelena, d. 1314) most likely took place in the early 1250s: the union produced two sons, the princes Stephen Dragutin (1276–1282) and Stephen Uros II Milutin (1282–1321), and a daughter, Brnjaca.<sup>1</sup> The events of Queen Helen's life, are largely drawn from the works of Archbishop Daniel II<sup>2</sup> (archep. 1324–1337), since sources for the Kingdom of Serbia in the second half of the thirteenth century are very sparse. Stephen Dragutin (who had been married to the daughter of Stephen V of Hungary prior to 1268) overthrew his father Uros I in 1276, and Uros retired to Sopocani Monastery, where he died a year later. King Dragutin then installed his mother to administer a large littoral appanage comprising Zeta and Trebinje.<sup>3</sup> Dragutin was deposed, in turn, at the council of Dezevo in 1282, and replaced by

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1 Very little is known of Brnjaca, who is represented on the Nemanjid family tree, modelled after the Tree of Jesse, in the narthex of the Church of the Virgin in Pec.

2 Archbishop Daniel II's long ecclesiastical career began on Mount Athos, where he was *igoumenos* until 1311, after which he was named Bishop of Banjska by King Milutin. Daniel II was present at Queen Helen's deathbed as the Bishop of Banjska. After Helen's death, Daniel II retired once again to monastic life in 1314–1316, but was recalled by King Milutin who had him named Bishop of Hum in 1317. Having restored the future King Stephen Uros III (1321–1331) after his exile in Constantinople in 1320/1, Daniel II was named archbishop of "all the lands of Serbia" in 1324, a title which he held until his death in 1337. On Daniel II's ecclesiastical career, see Marija Jankovic, "Danilo, banjski i humski episkop," *Arhiepiskop Danilo II i njegovo doba međunarodni naučni skup povodom 650 godina od smrti, decembar 1987*, ed. Vojislav Djuric (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1991), 83–88.

3 According to Archbishop Daniel II, the council's decision was enacted because Dragutin had been incapacitated by an injury sustained after he fell from his horse. However, Mavromatis suggested that the council wanted to divide the realm and distribute power to the nobility through the appanage system. See Leonidas Mavromatis, *Le fondation de l'Empire serbe: Le Kralj Milutin*. Byzantine Texts and Studies, 16 (Thessaloniki: Center for Byzantine Studies, 1978), 5–69.

Milutin. He was later compensated with an appanage near the Hungarian border.<sup>4</sup> Queen Helen's rule over her appanage remained uncontested throughout the period of intermittent conflict (1300–1312/14) between her two sons. However, it is possible that a few years before Queen Helen's death, her appanage was given to King Milutin's son, the future King Stephen Uros III Decanski (before his exile), between 1306 and 1309.<sup>5</sup> When Queen Helen died on February 8, 1314, her appanage was incorporated into King Milutin's territory.

The hagiographic corpus known as *Vitae regum et archiepiscoporum Serbiae*<sup>6</sup> covers a period from 1223 to 1375 and was composed by Archbishop Daniel II and

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4 John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 217–19. On medieval Serbian councils including the Council of Dezevo, see: Nikola Radojčić, *Srpski drzavni sabori u srednjem veku* (Belgrade: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1940), 83–106. See also, Mihailo Dinic, "Oblast kralja Dragutina posle Dezeve," *Glas Srpske akademije nauk* 203 (1951): 123–45. Once Dragutin was deposed from the throne of Serbia, he was known as King of Srem, a title that he may have inherited from his mother, see: Gordon McDaniel, "On Hungarian-Serbian Relations in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century: John Angelos and Queen Jelena," *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* 12 (1983): 43–50; here 47.

5 Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans* (see note 4), 258–59.

6 *Zivoti kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, ed. Djura Danicic (hereafter *VRAS*). Varium Reprint 59 (London 1792). The Danicic edition of the *VRAS* was published in 1866 with the financial assistance of Princess Julija Obrenovic. At the time, Danicic did not have access to the majority of the manuscripts containing the *VRAS* (listed by Gordon McDaniel, see below), and he used three manuscripts dating from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. He based his edition on the Russo-Slavonic version (K.a.) of 1736 from Sremski Karlovci, kept at the Patriarchal Library in Belgrade, and used as his control copies another Russo-Slavonic manuscript (K.b.) from 1780 (destroyed in 1941), as well as a sixteenth-century Serbo-Slavonic manuscript (L.) from the University Library of Lvov. Danicic used the Russo-Slavonic text of 1736 as his primary source, which he transcribed, resolving its abbreviations and introducing modern punctuation. The 1866 edition of the *VRAS* is still the only extant "critical" edition of the Slavonic text. The Modern Slavonic version was edited in 1935 by Ljubomir Mirkovic. Based on my consultation of the oldest surviving manuscript containing the *VRAS*, copied in 1526 at the monastery of Sopocani and now housed in the archives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, I discerned no major textological divergences from Danicic's approximative text of the *Life of Queen Helen*. However, my study of that particular manuscript, supervised by Professor Djordje Trifunovic, can only lead to tentative conclusions as to the definitive value of Danicic's edition. I therefore defer to Gordon McDaniel's observation that the *Life of Queen Helen* was the least altered *vita* of the *VRAS* and that the Danicic edition is a reliable source for the Slavonic text, since it shows no major alterations within the manuscript traditions. See Gordon McDaniel, "The Lives of the Serbian Kings and Archbishops by Danilo II: Textual History and Criticism," Ph.D. diss. University of Washington, St. Louis, 1980, 57–58, 135–36. McDaniel's dissertation includes an extensive stemmatic evaluation of all the extant (and known) manuscripts of the *VRAS*. The number of surviving copies of the manuscript from several periods show a varying significance and an increasing designation of this work as an historical genealogy of medieval Serbian Kings

his anonymous continuator(s) during the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The VRAS is the main source for the late thirteenth century and provides a literary account of events occurring in the Kingdom of Serbia, as well as its external relations. As hagiographies, the VRAS are a continuation of the literary exaltation of the Nemanjid dynasty<sup>8</sup> from the time of the founder of the dynasty, the Grand Zupan Stephen-Nemanja (St. Simeon), onwards. Daniel II's *vitae* of the Serbian rulers follow the typological schema of "dynastic hagio-biographies."<sup>9</sup> This literary genre became a distinctive feature of the literary oeuvre of medieval Serbia<sup>10</sup>: it was developed from the thirteenth century *vitae* of SS Simeon and Sava composed by the monk Teodosije, which articulated the convergence of secular and spiritual authority shared by St. Simeon and his son, St. Sava, the first archbishop of the autocephalous church.<sup>11</sup> The *vitae* composed by Archbishop Daniel II transfer the charismatic authority of the first Nemanjids to the rest of the dynasty by insisting on the filiations between the Nemanjid kings and Stephen-Nemanja as well as with the Byzantine emperors.<sup>12</sup>

In Daniel II's hagiographic account of the life and deeds of Queen Helen, the protagonist's patrimonial and charismatic authorities are predicated on her maternal role. In her *vita*, Queen Helen's authority over her sons and over her appanage are visible and codified, having been granted to her by her son upon the death of her husband, and therefore legitimate. Barbara Hill, in her evaluation of the power and authority of Komnenian imperial women, writes:

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and Archbishops (as *рѣдословіе*), see Ion Radu Mircea, "Les Vies des rois et archevêques serbes et leur circulation en Moldavie: Une copie inconnue de 1567," *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 5 (1966): 393–412, and as a contribution to the liturgy, due to their hagiographic form (as *житіе*), see Leontije Pavlovic, *Kultovi lica kod Srba i Makedonaca istorijsko-etnografska rasprava* (Smederevo: Narodni Muzej, 1965), 116.

7 McDaniel, *The Lives of the Serbian Kings and Archbishops by Danilo II* (see note 6), 16–19.

8 The Nemanjids ruled the medieval kingdom of Serbia from the time of the Grand Zupan Stephen-Nemanja (ca. 1167–1196) until 1371 when prince Lazar Hrebeljanovic married Milica (ca. 1335–1405) who descended from a younger branch of the Nemanjid family based in Zeta.

9 Stanislav Hafner, "Danilo als Historiograph des Mittelalters," *Arhiepiskop Danilo II i njegovo doba međunarodni naučni skup povodom 650 godina od smrti, decembar 1987*, ed. Vojislav Djuric (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1991), 131–37; here 136–37.

10 Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1971), 330.

11 Bosko Bojovic, *L'idéologie monarchique des hagio-biographies dynastiques du Moyen Age serbe*. *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 248 (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Orientale, 1995), 55.

12 For an analysis of the Byzantine origins of Stephen-Nemanja's authority and a description of the filial relationship between King Milutin and Andronicus II, see Bojovic, *L'idéologie monarchique* (see note 11), 326, 500.

Authority is the name given to power, which rests on legitimacy, and is exercised within a hierarchy of roles. It is much more circumscribed and precise. It is the general understanding that female power has usually existed in a framework of male authority, and that the balance of power in society lies with men. Many sources of power have been located, among them consciousness, language and sexuality.<sup>13</sup>

This paper will address the question of Queen Helen's authority as constructed in her *vita*, written by Archbishop Daniel II. Based on Daniel II's structuring and shaping of information about Queen Helen and her role as a mediator between her sons, it can be surmised that Queen Helen's authoritative role in attenuating the conflicts between her two sons serves as a proleptic argument serving to confirm the ascension of King Milutin after King Dragutin was deposed. However this "authoritative role" must be problematized, as it derives not from Queen Helen's legitimate filiation with the founder of the dynasty, but from other sources. This analysis of medieval authority is founded upon an evaluation of the highest social values that governed a particular social group and granted it legitimacy. The highest social values incarnated by Daniel II's protagonists in the *VRAS* include good governance, righteousness, and legitimacy of Nemanjid birth. Based on these criteria, Queen Helen, a non-Nemanjid woman (the only non-Nemanjid woman to be included in the official hagiographic literature of the Nemanjid kings) would not have fulfilled the essential criteria for a legitimate figure of authority in the Nemanjid kingdom.

In the eight episodes that constitute the *vita*, Daniel II makes a series of strategic narrative choices that frame the types of authority incarnated in Queen Helen. In order to create his image of an "ideal" queen, Daniel II obfuscates many details regarding Queen Helen's lineage. He depicts the queen as a feminine ideal—a good wife, mother, and a deferent Christian—and as an ideal ruler. Instances of royal panegyric occupy a central place in the *Life of Queen Helen* and strengthen the encomiastic *topoi* of education, nature and character. Royal panegyric amplifies the historical narrative and the words (of maternal and Christian love for her sons) and deeds (her charitable acts towards her subjects and her patronage of the Church) of the queen convey her spiritual qualities. Daniel II extends the realm of Queen Helen's authority to the conflict between the warring brother-kings Milutin and Dragutin. It is through her maternal authority that Queen Helen is able to actively promote peace and reconciliation between her sons. Using the key

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<sup>13</sup> Barbara Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium 1025–1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology. Women and Men in History* (Haven, Essex and New York: Longman, 1999), 22.

concepts derived from the constitutional literature of the Nemanjid dynasty, those of brotherly love and the sacred Nemanjid patrimony, Queen Helen, in the guise of Stephen-Nemanja, admonishes her sons to live in harmony. Queen Helen's charismatic legitimacy is then addressed by Daniel II's depiction of her as a "saintly queen-mother," a Marian representation, which along with her other virtues (and the *miraculae* performed by her remains) grant her the status of saint. Queen Helen's inclusion in the *VRAS* suggests the authoritative role of the queen in the attenuation of the dynastic tensions of the fourteenth century.

## The Treatment and Shaping of Information about Queen Helen

At the beginning of the *Life of Queen Helen*, Daniel II depicts himself as an official observer of many of the events that he intends to relate.<sup>14</sup> However, the saintly biography of Queen Helen, with its rhetorical amplifications and historicizing features,<sup>15</sup> contains many omissions. Contrary to the conventions of hagiography and history writing, Daniel II never gives precise details about Queen Helen's provenance, stating that she was of Frankish (φραγκικαῖο) origin—a general term referring to someone of Latin extraction—even though the parentage of most of the other royal consorts featured in the *VRAS* is accurately described.<sup>16</sup> Daniel II suggests Queen Helen's nobility of birth

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<sup>14</sup> *VRAS* (see note 6), 58.

<sup>15</sup> Francis J. Thomson, "Archbishop Daniel II of Serbia, Hierarch, Hagiographer, Saint: With Some Comments on the 'Vitae regum et archiepiscoporum Serbiae' and the Cults of Mediaeval Saints," *Analecta Bollandiana* 111.1–2 (1993): 103–34.

<sup>16</sup> *VRAS* (see note 6), 58. The identity of Queen Helen has been subject of scholarly debate. See, for instance, McDaniel, "On Hungarian-Serbian Relations in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century" (see note 4). The other major study of Queen Helen's identity is Cedomil Mijatovic, "Ko je kraljica Jelena," *Letopis Matice srpske* 217 (1903): 1–30. Both Mijatovic and McDaniel attempt to trace her origin to the Courtenay family, because of their ties with the Angevins, the Latin Empire of Constantinople, and Hungary. However, McDaniel makes the most compelling argument by tracing Helen's lineage from the Courtenay and Angelos families, both of whom were linked to the Angevins, the Hungarian Kingdom, and the Byzantine Empire. Helen's mother descended from the Courtenay family, which had ties (through marriage) with the Angevin kings of Naples, Sicily, and Jerusalem; see Stephen Rhys Davies, "Marriage and the Politics of Friendship: Charles II of Anjou, King of Naples (1285–1309)," Ph.D. Diss. (University College London, 1998), 282, table 1 (for the link with Charles I of Anjou through Philip de Courtenay, Matildis's uncle); 286, table 5 (for the link with the Hungarian Kingdom through Yolande de Courtenay, Matildis's aunt, who

without delineating her parentage. Since the author's objective was to present the queen as a naturalized Nemanjid, engendering two autochthonous kings, it was probably unnecessary to clarify her origins.

The archives of Dubrovnik and medieval Serbian charters<sup>17</sup> demonstrate that Queen Helen used her status as a royal consort and as a royal widow to further the political interests of the kingdom by strengthening ties with its Western neighbors and maintaining a balance within the western part of the kingdom.<sup>18</sup> This is probably the reason why she was granted rule over the littoral regions of Zeta, Trebinje, the coast including Konavli and Cavtat, and a portion of western Serbia that included the source of the Ibar River and Plav on the upper Lim.<sup>19</sup> In the *Life of Dragutin*, the eponymous king presents his mother with an appanage and grants her autonomous rule and whatever else she may desire.<sup>20</sup> However, Queen Helen demonstrates her subservience to King Dragutin, referring to him as her "lord" and "beloved son."<sup>21</sup> The basis of authority rests with the son, who is the legitimate and autocratic ruler in his own kingdom. Therefore, Queen Helen's authority is defined in terms and

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married Andrew II of Hungary). Helen's mother, Matildis, married (ca. 1234) John Angelos, son of the Byzantine emperor Isaac II Angelos by his second wife, Margaret of Hungary. John Angelos became the ruler of Srem and Count of Kovin in 1235 (which he inherited from his mother). John Angelos and Matildis had a daughter named Maria (born ca. 1236) who married Anselm de Keu (or de Cheu) and who was known to have been Queen Helen's sister. Since Anselm de Keu's (or de Cheu's) identity remains uncertain, McDaniel's hypothesis cannot be proven but, in my opinion, it presents the most acceptable argument for Queen Helen's identity.

**17** Aleksandra Fostikov, "Povelja kraljice Jelena Dubrovčanka o ukidanju carina u Maslinama i Slanom," *Stari srpski arhiv* 5 (2006): 173–186; "Cetiri pisma kraljice Jelene Dubrovackoj opštini o bosanskim dohocima," *Stari srpski arhiv* 5 (2006): 187–205.

**18** Barisa Krekic, "La Serbie entre Byzance et l'Occident au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Proceedings of the XIII<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Steven Runciman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 62–65. In 1242 and 1247, Uros I had a strong following amongst his Catholic subjects in Zeta and Primorje, since he supported their claim to an autonomous archbishopric against the political initiative of Pope Innocent IV, who attempted to consolidate the Catholic Church of Bosnia under the Archbishop of Hungary as a strategic step in the Hungarian Dominicans' battle against the Bogomils. This balanced political structure was later upheld by Queen Helen when she became the sole administrator of these regions.

**19** Gojko Subotic, "Kraljica Jelena Anzujska: Kitor crkvenih spomenika u Primorju," *Istoriski glasnik organ istoriskog drustva NR Srbije* 1–2 (1958): 131–48. The borders of these regions were the mouth of the Lim (a tributary of the Drina) and the surrounding area of the Ibar valley, VRAS (see note 6), 58. Queen Helen may have also encouraged the Franciscan mission in her appanage at Bar, Kotor and Ulcinj and in Skadar (1288), which was the queen's principal residence, Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans* (see note 4), 220.

**20** VRAS (see note 6), 19–21.

**21** VRAS (see note 6), 20.



within the limits of her personal relationship with the autocrat, her son.<sup>22</sup> Queen Helen is represented as a figure of temperance, whose good judgment and Christian virtues provide a constant example for her children to follow.

Although she continued to safeguard the political and religious balance instigated by the efforts of Uros I, it appears that Queen Helen made several attempts to undermine the more bellicose political maneuvers attempted during her husband's reign.<sup>23</sup> She may even have helped to further negotiations between the Nemanjid kingdom and Rome, intending to consolidate the union of the two churches.<sup>24</sup> Daniel II was clearly opposed to this union; in his *vita* of King Uros, he vituperates against the Byzantine Emperor for his complacency in these matters.<sup>25</sup> This may explain the absence of any mention of Queen Helen's involvement in strengthening diplomatic ties between the Nemanjids and Rome.

Persuasion was one aspect of Daniel II's role as a chronicler of the events of the reigns of the Nemanjid kings. Furthermore, the function of panegyric as advice literature, with panegyrists advocating dynastic causes and articulating a coherent ideology of kingship on behalf of and for the edification of their subjects, also explains the historical omissions and inaccuracies. In the *Life of Queen Helen*, Daniel II creates a feminine "ideal" of the good mother inclined towards God. Queen Helen spends much time in prayer and weeps on behalf of her children in order to guarantee them victory against their enemies, both tangible and spiritual.<sup>26</sup> Queen Helen's multiple acts of charity—feeding the poor, clothing the naked, comforting orphans, and distributing alms—are also

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22 Barbara Hill offers an evaluation of different types of female authority, Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium* (see note 13), 1–20.

23 The letter from Queen Helen to Dubrovnik of 1267–1268, addressed to *Knez Ivan Storlat* of Dubrovnik, indicates that she will provide assistance to Dubrovnik should Uros I plan a military campaign against it: “И ако ние хѣти краљь послати войскѣ на Дѣбровникѣ, или гдѣ или што годѣ пакостини Дѣбровникѣ, да е ѿдѣ мене вѣдѣние ѣ градѣ, колико навике могѣ врьзо,” (“And if the king should send his army to Dubrovnik or plan to cause harm to befall the inhabitants of Dubrovnik, I will send aid to the city as quickly as possible”), *Monumenta Serbica Spectantia Historiam Serbiae, Bosnae, Ragusii*, ed. Franz Miklosich. Editiones monumentorum Slavicorum veteris dialecti (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1858, rpt. 1964, 1988, 2006), 68–69.

24 Dragomir Maritsch, *Papstbriefe an Serbische Fürsten im Mittelalter: Kritische Studien* (Sremski Karlovci: Serbische Kloster Buchdruckerei, 1933), 53–59. Contains documents from the Pope's Chancellery that designate Queen Helen as the quasi-official legate of the Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Serbia and one who would promote the Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Serbia.

25 VRAS (see note 6), 110. Daniel II states that he is openly against the union of churches proclaimed at the Second Council of Lyons in 1276 and agreed between the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos and Pope Gregory X.

26 VRAS (see note 6), 70–74, 77–79, 80–82.

presented within the context of her maternal role.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, in order for Queen Helen to embody a “maternal ideal,” those of her political activities that were against her husband’s interest are suppressed in Daniel II’s hagiographic account.

## Piety and Concord: Constructing the “Ideal” Nemanjid Queen

Within this broader context, Daniel II’s presentation of reconciliation and brotherly love gives coherent form to a proleptic interpretation of historical events. However, as Henrik Birnbaum notes, the structural elements of the old Serbian *vita* remain the same throughout the medieval period, despite the historicizing and literary innovations of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writers.<sup>28</sup> The formulaic elements of Queen Helen’s *vita* represent the ideal of kingship and have strong parallels with the episodes of the *Life of Stephen-Nemanja* by Archbishop Sava I (archep. 1219–1234, d. 1236).

Daniel II presents the queen as an allegorical paradigm to Simeon-Nemanja, praising her acts of charity towards her people: for instance, she founded a school for girls from poor families in Brnjaci, where she resided.<sup>29</sup> Manifestations of her piety include the corporeal performance of compunction. Her tears and prayers are woven into a Marian representation of the queen as she meditates on the suffering of her people against the backdrop of civil unrest. Yet Queen Helen is also represented as the saintly mother of two kings, and as a female saint in the image of the Holy Virgin.<sup>30</sup> In this capacity, she incarnates the devotional title of the Holy Virgin as the *consolatrix afflictorum*.<sup>31</sup> In a speech about brotherly love and charity, Queen Helen is cited as speaking of herself as “blessed mother Helen” (блаженна матери Юленьа), a Marian reference that

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<sup>27</sup> VRAS (see note 6), 69, 79.

<sup>28</sup> Henrik Birnbaum, “Byzantine Tradition Transformed: The Old Serbian Vita,” *Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change. Contributions to the International Balkan Conference held at UCLA, October 23–28, 1969*, ed. Henrik Birnbaum and Speros Vryonis (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1972), 243–84; here 277–81.

<sup>29</sup> VRAS (see note 6), 69.

<sup>30</sup> VRAS (see note 6), 88, 89, 92.

<sup>31</sup> VRAS (see note 6), 68–69, citing Job 6,10. Mirjana Tatic-Djuric, “La Vierge dans l’oeuvre de l’archevêque Danilo II,” *Arhiepiskop Danilo II i njegovo doba međunarodni naučni skup povodom 650 godina od smrti, decembar 1987*, ed. Vojislav Djuric (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1991), 122.

evokes the authority of the Queen-mother exhorting her sons, in biblical terms, to live in peace and harmony.<sup>32</sup>

A generous donor to the monasteries of the Holy Land and Mount Athos;<sup>33</sup> Queen Helen engages in royal *philanthropia*<sup>34</sup> exchanging letters with the monks, requesting their opinion regarding various moral points and showering them with gifts.<sup>35</sup> She maintains a close relationship with the hierarchs of the autocephalous Serbian Church, many of whom are present at her deathbed when she takes the veil.<sup>36</sup> She is lauded as the first female Nemanjid ruler to found a dynastic religious centre in her own right, the monastic complex and church dedicated to the Mother of God at Gradac.<sup>37</sup> According to Daniel II, Queen Helen was inspired to found the Gradac complex by a vision, her fear of the Last Judgment, and concern for the salvation of her soul.<sup>38</sup> The rich iconographic programme on the southern wall of the nave shows the *Theotokos*, directly opposite and above the tomb of Queen Helen, with the patroness flanked by King Stephen Prvovencani and King Uros I.<sup>39</sup> It is therefore entirely possible that Gradac was meant to be a royal mausoleum (like Studenica) and a constituent part of the sacred topography of the Nemanjid dynasty.

In a panegyric excursus dedicated to the personality of the queen, Daniel II evokes her interior qualities to strengthen her legitimacy as an authority figure. The queen is presented as wise, skilled in politics, well-spoken, and in control of her gaze.<sup>40</sup> Such characteristics define the *topoi* of kingly virtues, deeds and saintliness, and are not a distinctive feature of the *Life of Queen Helen*. However, her virtues include many of the common qualifications for female

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32 VRAS (see note 6), 73, citing Galatians 5:22; Hebrew 13:2; 1 John 4:22; Ecclesiastes 4:9–10.

33 VRAS (see note 6), 65.

34 Barbara Hill, “The Ideal Komnenian Woman,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 23 (1996): 7–18; here 13: Φιλανθρωπία, “philanthropy,” is considered an imperial virtue commonly associated with Christian piety and charity.

35 VRAS (see note 6), 65.

36 VRAS (see note 6), 83–84.

37 VRAS (see note 6), 75–79.

38 VRAS (see note 6), 74–75.

39 Olivera Kandic, *Gradac* (Belgrade: Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, 1987), 15–17. According to Kandic, this linear genealogy probably extended towards the south pillars where Dragutin, Milutin, and a female figure were represented.

40 VRAS (see note 6), 60–61. Menander Rhetor describes the masculine virtue of *sophrosyne* (σοφροσύνη) as “self-control,” a constituent element in the construction of a *basilikos logos* (a speech written in praise of a ruler).

sainthood.<sup>41</sup> Daniel II adapts the format of a dynastic hagiography, such as that of St. Simeon, to a female subject. In light of the dynastic crisis caused by the rival claims of Dragutin and Milutin, the author of the *Life of Queen Helen* presents the argument for reconciliation as articulated by a queen who glaringly resembles the Great Zupan Stephen-Nemanja.

## Queen Helen's Authority as Teacher: the Concepts of Brotherly Love (БРАТООЛЮБЉЕ) and the Fatherland (ОТЪУЉСТВО)

The *Life of Queen Helen* evokes similar themes and narrative elements to those of the first Nemanjid hagiographies. The earliest *vitae*, written by Archbishop Sava I and King Stephen Prvovencani (1196–1227) for their father, Grand Zupan Stephen-Nemanja, include the *topoi* of patronage, piety, leadership, brotherly love, and reconciliation between warring brothers.<sup>42</sup> Stephen-Nemanja is presented as a father, a church founder (κτίτωρ), a monk and a saint.<sup>43</sup> A veterotestamentary framework is provided by various intertextual elements comparing Stephen-Nemanja to Abraham<sup>44</sup> and presenting him as a “Second Solomon.”<sup>45</sup> In the guise of “Second Solomon”, Stephen-Nemanja instructs his sons in the ways of piety, brotherly love, and reconciliation.<sup>46</sup> Stephen-Nemanja's relics become a rallying point for peace once they are brought to Serbia from Athos and laid to rest at his foundation, the monastery of Studenica.<sup>47</sup>

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41 Elizabeth Jeffreys, “Introduction,” *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, “Byzantium: Papers from the thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001,” ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys. Publications, 11 (Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 2–3. In Byzantine literature, the *Life of Theodora* provides a model for other *vitae* of women for both form and content and serves to ennoble the subject of the encomium.

42 “Život sv. Symeona od sv. Savu,” *Pamatky dřevniho pismnictvi Johoslovanub* 2, ed. Pavel Safarik, (Prague: Doplňky z pozustalosti Šafarikovy rozmnožene, 1873).

43 Simeon-Nemanja is referred to by the epithet “blessed,” “Život sv. Symeona od sv. Savu” (see note 42), 8, 30.

44 “Život sv. Symeona od sv. Savu” (see note 42), 1, 35.

45 “Život sv. Symeona od sv. Savu” (see note 42), 6, 20.

46 “Život sv. Symeona od sv. Savu” (see note 42), 8, 12.

47 “Život sv. Symeona od sv. Savu” (see note 42), 13, 18. St. Sava outlines Stefan Prvovencani's letter asking him to bring the relics of Stefan-Nemanja to Serbia to quell the uprisings.

The “Life of Simeon-Nemanja” by St. Sava was written in 1208, a decade after the death of his father in 1198. Stephen-Nemanja’s sons, Stephen and Vukan (1202–1204), had begun warring with one another perhaps as early as the 1190s, after Simeon-Nemanja had retired to Hilandar on Mount Athos. St. Sava does not relate or even refer to these events explicitly. However, Stephen-Nemanja’s somewhat abstract counsel to his sons, pronounced on his deathbed, also functions as a proleptic argument insisting on brotherly love and peace between princes.<sup>48</sup>

The *Life of Queen Helen* and the *vitae* of Uros I, Dragutin and Milutin all include themes of brotherly love and harmony.<sup>49</sup> The question of succession after the death of Uros I is never explicitly mentioned, and Daniel II presents both Dragutin and Milutin as heirs to the Nemanjid patrimony, each receiving his equal part.<sup>50</sup> Daniel II’s account in the *VRAS* is prefaced by a short and comprehensive linear genealogy of the saintly Nemanjid kings, with no mention of the rules of succession, the expansion of dynastic space, and the competition between princes for the Nemanjid patrimony.<sup>51</sup> The earliest Byzantine accounts of the organized settlement of the Slavs in the country of “Zachlumi and Terbounia”<sup>52</sup> show the repercussions of equal distribution of ancestral lands amongst brothers.<sup>53</sup> At the beginning of the thirteenth century, St. Sava writes in the *Nomocanon* that brothers have equal inheritance rights to the ancestral lands of the ruling family.<sup>54</sup> The political history of the Nemanjid kingdom in the early fourteenth century suggests that an attempt to divide the ancestral territory would not have been unlikely. Daniel II describes Queen Helen’s exhortation to her sons:

Both of her [Queen Helen’s] sons were righteous and autonomous kings within their fatherland, the land of Serbia, ruling over many different peoples ... [Queen Helen], on their behalf, beseeched the Lord to safeguard them from becoming enmeshed in the net of sin. [Queen Helen] herself taught them, using sensible words inspired by the Lord,

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48 “Život sv. Symeona od sv. Savu” (see note 42), 9; Annette Alpert, “The Life of Stefan Nemanja by St. Sava: A Literary Analysis,” *Wiener Slawistisches Jahrbuch* 22 (1976): 7–14, here 14.

49 *VRAS* (see note 6), 70–74. These concepts are explicitly outlined in the section of the *Life of Queen Helen* that describes the royal household and her exhortation to her sons.

50 *VRAS* (see note 6), 22–53, 102–61.

51 Eugene Hammel, “Demographic Constraints on the Formation of Traditional Balkan Households,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44 (1999): 172–86.

52 Konstaninos Porphyrogennitos, *De Administrando Imperio* (hereafter *DAI*), ed. Gyula Moravcsik and Romilly J. H. Jenkins *Dumbarton Oaks Texts*, 1 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1967), 152, 21–22, 33–44.

53 *DAI* (see note 52), 154, 33–44.

54 *Sv. Sava sabrana dela*, ed. Tomislav Jovanovic (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1998), 117–21.

saying: “My beloved children, heed my words ... for the Lord himself hath granted each of you uncontested rule within your own fatherland ... . Be sensible and reasonable rulers, augment the churches with ornaments, be charitable towards the poor ... love each other and have solidarity of will and body ...” And the sons of the blessed lady Helen, accepted these words with delight and fear for she was their blessed mother.<sup>55</sup>

Daniel II stresses the ideal of heavenly and earthly harmony, represented by the fatherland (отъѹство), which must not be divided. The concept of fatherland is elaborated in the hagiographies of Stephen-Nemanja. In the *Life of Simeon-Nemanja* by Archbishop Sava I, the monk Simeon is referred to as the father (отъць) of his people and founder (хтитѹр) of his realm.<sup>56</sup> This theme is further elaborated by his designation as Abraham, the father and patriarch of the Kingdom of Israel.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Queen Helen acts as an *exemplum* to her children, and her acts of charity and her piety are meant to be copied by her sons. However, where Stephen-Nemanja uses an order<sup>58</sup> (заповѣдъ) to command the obedience of his children and subjects, Queen Helen uses a lesson or *exemplum* (поученик)<sup>59</sup> to guide her sons to follow the path of righteousness (въ влзѣти вѣрѣ).<sup>60</sup> As the mother of two Nemanjid kings and as a Nemanjid widow, Queen Helen is invested with the responsibility of rearing her children and safeguarding their inheritance. According to Daniel II, Queen Helen discharged her dynastic and maternal duties with great humility and aptitude and she was reputed to be a wise and righteous woman, which eventually led to her canonization as a saint. Unlike Uros I, who quarrels with and cheats his son Dragutin and has to forfeit his kingdom, Queen Helen is represented as a figure of temperance who creates balance and harmony between her sons.<sup>61</sup>

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55 ”Дѣа во сына кѣ вѣста въ дѣни тѣхъ крѣпка и самодръжавьна краля въ отъѹствѣни своихъ сръбьсѣи земли · многы страны кзыкъ прѣдръжешта... ѡ сихъ людаше се къ гдѹ не оѹвезноути се има въ сѣти грѣховьнѣи сама богоразоумьныими глаголы оѹвѣштаваюшти ꙗ глаголююшти мѡи ѹдѣѣ любилиѣ... боѹ за великоѹ кѡ ѹловѣколювикъ оѹтвердильшоѹ прѣстоль ваю непоколѣбиво владыѹствовати въ отъѹствѣни своихъ... съмыслѣно и разоумѣно имѣниа своа строкшѣ клико дарованиа къ црькви божьствьныхъ мѡлостынкъ же къ ништинѣмъ и страньнымъ... вы же оѹбо любовиоу сръдѣца сьдръжита се сама к диномыслѣноѹ волю имѹшта въ тѣлеси по пророкоѹ хвалештоѹ любовь вратьскоѹ... Она же сына — христолюбивѣа краля въ сладѣсть и съ воазниѹ принадаста глаголы и поучениа влзѣныхъ матерѣ своихъ Юлены повиноѹюшта се юи съ вьсакою радѡстию Гладѡстьнѣ. “ VRAS (see note 6), 70 – 73.

56 “Zivot sv. Symeona od sv. Savu” (see note 42), 8, 30.

57 “Zivot sv. Symeona od sv. Savu” (see note 42), 1, 35.

58 “Zivot sv. Symeona od sv. Savu” (see note 42), 6, 1–20.

59 VRAS (see note 6), 73.

60 VRAS (see note 6), 73.

61 VRAS (see note 6), 7–21.

Queen Helen offers her advice while exhorting her sons to love one another: she demands that her sons protect the Nemanjid patrimony against those who would wish to lead them astray and steal their inheritance.<sup>62</sup> Daniel II presents this episode in a speech, pronounced by Queen Helen when she is ill and praying for her sons' future welfare.<sup>63</sup> The speech makes several oblique references to the diverging political orientations of Milutin and Dragutin after 1282 (the Council of Dezeva, when Milutin asserted his claim to the Nemanjid kingdom) and the intermittent conflict between Dragutin and Milutin that lasted from 1300 to 1312/14.<sup>64</sup> The dynastic conflict of the beginning of the fourteenth century demonstrates a climate of competing opportunities in a decentralized dynastic culture. In this environment of competition for new territories and political alliances, Queen Helen is a political mediator who teaches her sons the value of patrilineal kingship. Having already been presented as a capable ruler over her own appanage, Queen Helen bridges the divide between her sons by articulating the importance of concord for the preservation and effective administration of their patrimony.

## Symbolic and Allegorical Relationships: the Transfer of Charismatic Authority from Stephen-Nemanja to Queen Helen

The deathbed narrative in the *Life of Queen Helen*, similar to that of earlier Serbian hagiographies (the *Life of Simeon-Nemanja* by St. Sava and the *Life of Saint Simeon* by Stephen Prvovencani), functions as a multi-layered construction. On the rhetorical level, it promotes the "ideal" image of the queen as a proponent of peace within the ancestral kingdom. Nowhere is this more explicit than in the encomium delivered by King Milutin at his mother's funeral procession.<sup>65</sup> Milutin arrives in Gradac in time for the funeral, whereas his brother King Dragutin only makes an appearance after it, since he has been summoned from a distant land.<sup>66</sup> The orator laments his mother's passing, saying "you facilitated our victories through your prayers to God on

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<sup>62</sup> VRAS (see note 6), 72.

<sup>63</sup> VRAS (see note 6), 70–73.

<sup>64</sup> Mavromatis, *La fondation de l'empire serbe* (see note 3), 1–22.

<sup>65</sup> VRAS (see note 6), 90, 93–95.

<sup>66</sup> VRAS (see note 6), 94.

our behalf”<sup>67</sup> and exclaiming “you are blessed, my lady mother.”<sup>68</sup> This scene contains many of the performative elements of declamatory rhetoric: exhortations, imperatives, questions, exclamations, commands, and expression of wishes.<sup>69</sup> King Milutin’s speech is followed by a display of royal largesse and he eventually goes to visit his brother. The brothers rejoice in their brotherly love (братолюбѣ) and part on the best of terms.<sup>70</sup> Soon after this propitious meeting, King Milutin’s wife, Simonida, goes to Belgrade to join King Dragutin’s wife, Catherine, and they both visit Queen Helen’s tomb at Gradac.<sup>71</sup> Thus Gradac becomes a spiritual nexus for Queen Helen’s successors and a place of dynastic commemoration.

Our interpretation of the key features of the *Life of Queen Helen* is strengthened by the dynastic iconography of the monastic churches in Gradac,<sup>72</sup> Sopocani,<sup>73</sup> Gracanica,<sup>74</sup> and Arilje.<sup>75</sup> These iconographic examples constitute the visual translation of the dynastic literature produced in the monasteries.<sup>76</sup>

The quelling of tensions between warring brothers is conjugated by the kings of the saintly Nemanjid dynasty represented in linear succession and paralleled by Old Testament examples. The royal genealogy is mirrored by the Tree of Jesse theme elaborated by Archbishop Daniel II for the monastic church at Pec. These iconographic themes correspond to the ekphrastic elements of the *Life of Queen*

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67 “ѡко богоу прик тѣныни ти молитвами пособствѡуѡши намъ въ вранехъ” VRAS (see note 6), 92. John Fine writes that Dragutin’s absence at his mother’s funeral was probably due to his well-founded fear of being seized by his brother, which would explain why the wives of the two kings are sent as diplomatic envoys later on in the hagiographic account to seal the peace between their husbands, Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans* (see note 4), 259.

68 “блжжѣна кси госпождѣ мати моѡа.” VRAS (see note 6), 91. Furthermore, Psalm 112 refers to motherhood and fecundity, representing the ideal mother as gladdened by many children and calling her “blessed.”

69 Ida Toth, “Rhetorical *theatron* in Byzantium: The Example of Palaiologan Imperial Orations,” *Theatron: Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. Georgios Fatouros and Michael Grünbart. Millennium-Studien, 13 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 444.

70 VRAS (see note 6), 94–95.

71 VRAS (see note 6), 96–99.

72 Kandic, *Gadac* (see note 39), fig. 8.

73 Svetozar Radojic, *Portreti srpskih vladara u srednjem veku* (Skoplje: Muzej juzne Srbije u Skoplju, 1935), 22–23.

74 Radojic, *Portreti srpskih vladara* (see note 73), 44, note 81.

75 Radojic, *Portreti srpskih vladara* (see note 73), 32.

76 Vojislav Djuric, “Istorijske kompozicije u srpskom slikarstvu srednjega veka i njihove knjizevne paralele,” *Zbornik radova vizantoloskog instituta* 8.2 (1964): 121–31.



*Helen*, most notably the deathbed scene modeled after the Dormition of the *Theotokos* (a common theme in Nemanjid iconography).<sup>77</sup>

On a visual level, the “deathbed scene” is an extension of the Holy Virgin imagery and is meant to parallel the Dormition of the *Theotokos*. This imagery reaches its epitome in Stephen-Milutin’s encomium to his mother. Queen Helen is referred to as “provider”<sup>78</sup> of the poor and afflicted, “the source of life-giving water,”<sup>79</sup> and represented as a divine intercessor for her people and family.<sup>80</sup> These devotional epithets of the *Theotokos* were used for the iconography on the façade of Daniel II’s tomb located in the archiepiscopal church at Pec.<sup>81</sup> This highly rhetorical episode of Queen Helen’s *vita* draws distinct parallels between Queen Helen and the *Theotokos*, an adjustment to the various veterotestamentary references used for the saintly kings. The *Theotokos* reference to Queen Helen constitutes the highest praise that can be accorded to a female protagonist and emphasizes the unity of princes and the supremacy of those “born of the most righteous root.”<sup>82</sup> The veterotestamentary analogies embody a constitutional and moral value whereby the Nemanjid dynasty is granted historical and charismatic legitimacy. More so than her husband (a legitimate descendant of Stephen-Nemanja), Queen Helen is invested with Stephen-Nemanja’s charismatic authority, which is reinvigorated during the ceremonial translation of her relics to Gradac and through the account of her posthumous miracles.

## Conclusion

The representation of Queen Helen’s authority over her sons is predicated on the social ideal of motherhood and is further legitimated by the charismatic imperative of the Nemanjid dynasty. Based on the theory of kingship articulated by the dynastic hagiographies, as a non-Nemanjid, Queen Helen would have had neither the right of inheritance (of the *отъѣство*) nor that of conquest to bolster her authority. Daniel II posits that in order to be accepted as a legitimate

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<sup>77</sup> See the iconographic composition of the Dormition in Daniel II’s church at Pec, comparable with the description of Queen Helen’s death in the *VRAS*; Gojko Subotic, *L’art médiéval du Kosovo* (Paris: Thalia, 2006), fig. 8.

<sup>78</sup> “кръмительницѣ” *VRAS* (see note 6), 92.

<sup>79</sup> “непрѣсыхакмыи источуныиѣ воды живыи,” *VRAS* (see note 6), 92.

<sup>80</sup> *VRAS* (see note 6), 92.

<sup>81</sup> Subotic, *L’art médiéval* (see note 77), fig. 4,7,8.

<sup>82</sup> “отъ доброплодынаго во корѣне,” *VRAS* (see note 6), 4,8,13.

authority, the queen had to fulfill the socially mediated obligations that define womanhood—marriage, maternity, widowhood—and the charismatic qualifications defining sainthood. From this perspective, Daniel II's account of the life and deeds of Queen Helen demonstrates that while the royal androlect—the series of princely ideals embodied by Queen Helen as well as many of the other Nemanjid princes—is used in the representation and shaping of information about the queen as a figure of authority, the subject of his hagiography must have been of dynastic (and, by extension, of political) consequence to merit such an account.

In Archbishop Daniel II's hagiography, Queen Helen's authority is predicated on her maternal obligations towards her sons, which include instructing them in the Christian faith and in patrimonial duties and values. The historical Queen Helen appears to have been a figure of political authority who ruled over an appanage for over thirty years in her own right. Based on the probability of her heritage, Queen Helen's authority most likely derived from her diplomatic ties with the Kingdom of Hungary, Rome, and the Angevins in Sicily.<sup>83</sup> Beyond the rhetorical and syncretic aspects of the *vita* (the hagiographic *topoi*), Daniel II presents a narrative strategy whereby Queen Helen bridges the divide between the founder of the dynasty the Grand Zupan Stephen-Nemanja and King Milutin. In the internecine conflicts of the fourteenth century, Queen Helen lends her political acumen to a local situation, attenuating the conflict between her sons and legitimating the ascendance of King Milutin. Whereas King Uros I is discredited as a consequence of his bellicose attitude towards his son Dragutin, Queen Helen is legitimated due to her temperance and rhetorical ability in admonishing her sons to live in peace and harmony. Based on the historical context, language, and structuring of Queen Helen's *vita* by Archbishop Daniel II, a figure of political authority emerges, defined and legitimated by maternity.

## The Nemanjid Dynasty

Stephen Nemanja m. Ana	1166–1196
Vukan Nemanjic	1202–1204
Stephen II Nemanja Prvovencani	1196–1223
m. 1. Eudocia Angelina; 2. Ana Dandolo	

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<sup>83</sup> McDaniel, "On Hungarian-Serbian Relations in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century" (see note 4), 46, 49–50.

Stephen Radoslav	1223 – 1234
m. Ana Komnene Doukaina	
Stephen Vladislav I	1234 – 1243
m. Beloslava of Bulgaria	
Stephen Uros I	1243 – 1276
m. Helen of Anjou (d. 1314)	
Stephen Dragutin	1276 – 1282
m. 1. Catherine of Hungary; 2. Elizabeth the Cuman	
Stephen Uros II Milutin	1282 – 1321
m. 1. Anne of Bulgaria; 2. Elizabeth of Hungary;	
3. Anne Terter of Bulgaria; 4. Simonida Palaiologina	
Stephen Uros III Decanski	1321 – 1331
m. 1. Theodora of Bulgaria; 2. Maria Palaiologina	
Stephen Uros IV Dusan	1331 – 1335
m. Helen of Bulgaria	



Mollie M. Madden

# Symbols and Soldiers: English Royal Authority in Gascony, 1355–1356<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Gascony was central to the ongoing conflict between Edward III (r. 1327–1377) and France's Philip VI (r. 1328–1350) and John II (r. 1350–1364) in the early stages of the Hundred Years War, and this added to the tension between competing authorities that required obedience to them. This meant that any representative of England's King Edward III sent to represent the king's interests in the Duchy of Gascony had to negotiate these intersecting authorities, preferably without unduly offending the notoriously touchy and independent Gascon nobles. Michael Prestwich describes noble society in Gascony during the reign of Edward I (r. 1272–1307) as “highly individualistic and competitive, as a result of partible inheritance and of the fact that much land was not held under terms of feudal tenure ... a land of fragmented lordship, with a large but often impoverished aristocracy.” Furthermore, the centralization that had occurred in England did not exist in Gascony; it was difficult to administer and rule, and “there was little sense of unity between Gascony and England.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, English royal authority had to be visible and concretely constituted through both force when necessary and symbolic representations in order to compel obedience and submission from those subject to it. Authority in this instance, then, was understood as something subjects were obliged to submit to, something embodied in the king but transferable to his chosen representatives, and something both legitimate and precedented.

English royal authority and efforts to maintain it often conflicted with the efforts of the French monarchy to wrest Gascony from English control and bring it into France, and both the French and English monarchs were up against the fiercely independent Gascon nobles who were more than willing to play the opposing kings against each other in order to preserve their historic liberties.<sup>3</sup> Within Gascony there were overlapping jurisdictions and conflicting

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks to the editors for their helpful feedback and insightful comments.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Prestwich, *Edward I*, Yale English Monarchs (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 298–99.

<sup>3</sup> For example, if a Gascon received an unfavorable judgment from an English official, he would appeal to the French king, who was the Duke of Gascony's technical overlord. The French kings

claims,<sup>4</sup> and many of the Gascon nobles were willing to change their loyalties if it was in their own self-interest. Edward I had described them as “notorious for their changeableness, never adhering to promises that they made.”<sup>5</sup> By 1355, the pressure from France had intensified and some Gascon nobles had gone over to the French. It was into this tense and sometimes rapidly shifting situation that Edward III sent Edward of Woodstock (1330–1376), Prince of Wales and later known as the Black Prince,<sup>6</sup> ostensibly to punish John, Count of Armagnac (1311–1373), to bring those parts of Gascony that had fallen to France through war or changes of loyalty back under the authority of the English crown, and to make new allies when and where possible.<sup>7</sup> In short he was to re-establish and extend English royal authority in Gascony. An indenture<sup>8</sup> between the

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were more than happy to oblige and had used this procedure before to tame the power of overmighty vassals. See Prestwich, *Edward I* (see note 2), chapters 11 and 15. The English kings used a similar strategy when dealing with Wales and Ireland.

4 This was not a situation unique to Gascony. Saskia Sassen describes medieval Europe as “scattered de-facto mini-sovereignities” and “a period of complex interactions among particular forms of territorial fixity, the absence of exclusive territorial authority, the existence of multiple crisscrossing jurisdictions, and the embedding of rights in classes of people rather than in territorially exclusive units,” Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 32.

5 *Foedera, conventiones, litteræ, et cujuscunque generis acta publica inter Reges Angliæ et alios quosvis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, bel communitates; ab ingressu Gulielmi I. in Angliam, A.D. 1066. ad nostra usque tempora habita aut tractata: ex autographis, infra secretiore archivorum regionum thesaurarias, asservatis; aliisque summæ vetustatis instrumentis, ad historiam anglicanam spectantibus, fideliter exscripta*, ed. Thomas Rymer (hereafter *Foedera*), vol. 1, ii (London: Record Commission, 1816–1869), 554; Prestwich, *Edward I* (see note 2), 299.

6 David Green, *The Black Prince* (Stroud, Gloucestershire; Charleston, SC: Tempus, 2001); Richard W. Barber, *Edward, Prince of Wales and Aquitaine: A Biography of the Black Prince* (New York: Scribner, 1978); Hubert Cole, *The Black Prince* (London: Hart-David, MacGibbon, 1976); Barbara Emerson, *The Black Prince* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976); John Harvey, *The Black Prince and His Age* (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield, 1976); Henry Dwight Sedgwick, *The Life of Edward the Black Prince, 1330–1376: The Flower of Knighthood Out of All the World* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill, 1932); R. P. Dunn-Pattison, *The Black Prince* (London: Methuen & Co., 1910); G. P. R. James, *A History of the Life of Edward the Black Prince, and of Various Events Connected Therewith, which Occurred during the Reign of Edward III, King of England* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, 1836).

7 *Register of Edward the Black Prince, Preserved in the Public Record Office*, ed. Alfred Edward Stamp and M. C. B. Dawes (hereafter *BPR*). Vol. IV (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1933), 143–45; London, The National Archives (henceforth TNA), E 36/278, f. 88.

8 An indenture was, essentially, a contract for military service that specified such things as the length of service, pay, number of men to be provided, whether livery or other equipment, e.g., arrows or bow staves, would be provided, etc. By the 1350s this had become the standard method of recruiting troops and had replaced the feudal levy.

Black Prince and the King specifically laid out their respective obligations. More importantly, it detailed the Black Prince's authority as the King's representative in Gascony and, by implication, the obedience he could expect or compel from the Gascons. The indenture, though, was only one of the ways in which the Black Prince's authority was constituted. This article explores the type of authority the Black Prince held and then looks at the specific ways in which that authority was established and enforced. It was both expressed and re-enforced through the conscious use and manipulation of symbols (e.g., seals), and, perhaps more importantly, the Black Prince had the necessary means to enforce it, itself a highly visible symbol of his authority—a symbol understandable to not only the Gascons but also the French.

## Obliging Authority

Before looking at the symbols and soldiers, it is first necessary to consider what kind of authority the Black Prince held. Thanks to the indenture, the Black Prince, in addition to his not insignificant personal authority as the Prince of Wales and reputation as a soldier, had “full power under the king's great seal” to make decrees, remove ministers from office and appoint new ones, distribute the lands “gained in war,” and “make truces” and “power by commission” to “seize into the king's hands all lands, towns ... and other things” that had belonged to the Duchy of Gascony and “to pass judgment.”<sup>9</sup> The Black Prince, for all intents and purposes, spoke with the King's voice “as if the king were there in person.”<sup>10</sup> Clearly, the Black Prince, as the king's lieutenant, held royal authority in Gascony and very specific powers. More generally speaking, the Black Prince held obliging authority.

Obliging authority requires a response from those subject to it: obedience. The flip side of this, of course, is the power to punish those who are not obedient. The king has the right to deprive his subjects of life and goods, and this is clear in the Black Prince's indenture. In addition to his power to judge “any who are rebellious and disobedient in those parts,” the Black Prince also had the power “to pardon them and grant them life and limb.”<sup>11</sup> Obliging

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9 “... Pleni poiar sous le grand seal de Roi ...”; “gagner de guerre ...”; “prendre treves ...”; “poiar pro commission ... seisir en la manu le Roi toutes les tenements, villes ... et autre choses ...” and “ent cit justice ...” *BPR*, IV (see note 7), 145; TNA, E 36/278, f. 88r.

10 “... Come le Roi y feust meismes.” *BPR*, IV (see note 7), 144; TNA, E 36/278, f. 88r.

11 “... Des rebeux [et] desobeisantz celle parties et a eux pardonn faire de lour trespas et granter a eux vie et membre ...” *BPR*, IV (see note 7), 145; TNA, E 36/278, f. 88v.

authority clearly relies upon the value of deterrence, which is “used to oblige, bind and compel obedience.”<sup>12</sup> This requires power, which, as Susan Reynolds points out, is not necessarily the same as authority. A usurper, for example, could have the power to coerce and demand obedience, but that would not inevitably translate to authority or legitimacy. Power, then, can function and be exercised independently of authority. Authority, however, “seems to need to be backed by coercive power.”<sup>13</sup>

During the early stages of the Hundred Years War, particularly in the aftermath of the Black Death, English state authority increased as the king and aristocracy came together to make a more cohesive government. In part this was “to facilitate or coerce the members of the upper orders to stand to their obligations.”<sup>14</sup> The reign of Edward III saw the continuation and further developments of debates about kingship and sovereignty, as well as the promulgation of theories of authority and power, particularly in terms of the extent and limits of a monarch’s power.<sup>15</sup> A concurrent development was the appropriation of kingly power by princes, as well as the adaptation of Roman law and a semantic shift from lordship to sovereignty.<sup>16</sup> Thus the Black Prince’s authority should be understood in this context and as something he, in part, already possessed. What he lacked, Edward III, the Duke of Gascony, transferred to him in writing.

## Legitimacy of Authority

The Black Prince’s authority was constituted in several ways. It was expressly granted to him, symbolically represented, and clearly enforceable. Above all, it was legitimate, and the symbols that represented his authority also

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<sup>12</sup> Norman Doe, *Fundamental Authority in Late Medieval English Law*. Cambridge Studies in English Legal History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 37.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Reynolds, “Secular Power and Authority in the Middle Ages,” *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies*, ed. Huw Pryce and John Watts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11–22; here 11.

<sup>14</sup> Robert C. Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death, 1341–1381: A Transformation of Governance and Law*. Studies in Legal History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>15</sup> David Green, *Edward the Black Prince: Power in Medieval Europe* (Harlow: Pearson and Longman, 2007), 17. For more discussion of this topic, see William Huse Dunham, Jr. and Charles T. Wood, “The Right to Rule in England: Depositions and the Kingdom’s Authority, 1327–1485,” *American Historical Review* 81 (1976): 738–61.

<sup>16</sup> Green, *Edward the Black Prince* (see note 15), 18–19.



conveyed its legitimacy and his as a holder of royal authority. Legitimacy mattered, as it seems that legitimate authority was greatly respected in the Middle Ages.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, a king wishing to rule peacefully needed to be seen as a legitimate authority.<sup>18</sup> Issues of succession and ability aside, this meant the king had to respect the sources of his authority: the accepted social and political hierarchy, the community—particularly the great men of the kingdom—and customs. Otherwise, those great men in particular could and would question the king's authority and their obligations to submit to it.<sup>19</sup>

First, if not foremost, the Black Prince was a legitimate choice in whom to invest royal authority. His position as the eldest son signified that he was the heir to the English throne—Edward III had three other sons at this time, all too young to lead an expedition of this size,<sup>20</sup> and his various titles, the most important of which was Prince of Wales,<sup>21</sup> made him the most likely choice to embody royal authority. His position imbued him with a certain amount of personal authority, which was necessary given that he was relatively untested as a commander. However, a certain lack of experience was made up for by the respect he commanded as a soldier, a soldier who had earned the trust and respect of both Edward III and the earls and men sent with him to Gascony.

The Black Prince's introduction to warfare was the Crecy campaign in 1346, during which he undoubtedly benefited from observing his father, Edward III, one of the best generals of the time.<sup>22</sup> This practical experience would have sup-

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**17** Reynolds, "Secular Power" (see note 13), 21–22. As she discusses in the article, there were acts of rebellion; however, most of these were about individual abuses rather than the political and social structures of medieval monarchies themselves.

**18** Reynolds, "Secular Power" (see note 13), 12.

**19** Ironically, Edward III and his lawyers made an argument along similar lines. As Philip VI had usurped the throne of France, he (and his successors) was not a legitimate authority and Edward III did not owe him homage for Gascony and could, therefore, wage war against him, an option not open to a vassal. Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War: Trial by Battle*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 293.

**20** John of Gaunt (1340–1399) and Edmund of Langley (1341–1402) were, at the ages of 14 and 15, too young to lead this expedition but not too young to serve, considering that the Black Prince was only 16 at the Battle of Crecy (1346). Lionel of Antwerp (1338–1368) was also a bit too young at 17 for command of this expedition. The last surviving son, Thomas of Woodstock, was born in 1355.

**21** This is, it should be noted, a relatively new title, as the Black Prince's grandfather, Edward II (r. 1307–1327), was the first to bear the title of Prince of Wales after Edward I's successful conquest of the principality.

**22** Kelly DeVries, "Teenagers at War During the Middle Ages," *The Premodern Teenager: Youth and Society, 1150–1650*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler. Essays and studies, I (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 207–23; here 215.

plemented his earlier education and was an important way in which a medieval commander was trained. It was at Crecy that the Prince “learned the knightly skills which he later put to excellent use at the Battle of Poitiers [1356], at which time he captured the French king.”<sup>23</sup> Even before the actual Battle of Crecy, however, the Black Prince participated in smaller raids as part of the larger campaign. For example, he was given command of the vanguard for the march through Normandy, which began on 18 July 1346, under the watchful eyes of the earl of Warwick, the Marshal of the Army, and the earl of Northampton, the constable.<sup>24</sup> More importantly, he was given command of the center at the Battle of Crecy, where he held his position—on foot—against several French cavalry charges despite several direct attacks on his person and even, at one point, being “compelled to fight on his knees.”<sup>25</sup>

Geoffrey the Baker describes the Prince’s actions in glowing terms: “running through horses, felling knights, crushing helmets, cutting lances apart, avoiding the enemy’s missiles; as he did so, he encouraged his men, defended himself, helped fallen friends to their feet, and set everyone an example.”<sup>26</sup> Despite his youth (he was 16), he “showed military skill far beyond [his] teenage years.”<sup>27</sup> Nor was he simply fighting at Crecy; he was given command and much older veterans followed, which, as DeVries suggests, implies that his youth was not an issue for these veterans. What mattered were his demonstrated abilities as a leader and his military skills,<sup>28</sup> as well as the bonds he forged with several soldiers who would later accompany him to Gascony in 1355. Clearly, his abilities, his success and leadership on the battlefield, inspired loyalty and respect, which translated into personal authority independent, at least in part, of his position. Additionally, his fame and prowess as a soldier,

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23 “Ibi didicit ille militaris honor quomodo bellum de Poitiers, in quo postmodum regem Franciae captivavit, actus militares expertus ordinaret,” Geoffrey the Baker, *Chronicon Galfridi le Baker de Swynebroke*, ed. Sir Edward Maunde Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), 167.

24 Richard Barber, “The Acts of War of Edward III,” *The Life and Campaigns of the Black Prince from Contemporary Letters, Diaries and Chronicles, including Chandos Herald’s Life of the Black Prince*, ed. and trans. Richard Barber (London: The Boydell Press, 1997), 29.

25 DeVries, “Teenagers at War,” (see note 22), 216; “... tunc combellebatur genuflexus pugnare.” Baker, *Chronicon* (see note 21), 166–67.

26 “... Equos perforando, equites prosternendo, cassides conquatiendo, lanceas truncando, ictus objectos prudenter frustrando, suos juvando, seipsum defendo, amicos prostratos erigendo, et suis omnibus exemplum befefaciendi exhibendo ...,” *The Life and Campaigns of the Black Prince*, ed. Barber (see note 24), 44; Baker, *Chronicon* (see note 23), 166–67.

27 DeVries, “Teenagers at War” (see note 22), 208. See DeVries also for the discussion of the ages of medieval soldiers and the results of cemetery and battlefield excavations.

28 DeVries, “Teenagers at War” (see note 22), 215.

his experience at Crecy, made him a legitimate choice in which to invest royal authority.

One thing that made the Black Prince's authority legitimate was the way in which it was transferred to him. On 10 July 1355 the Black Prince made his indenture with Edward III. This indenture "witness[ed] that the *king had appointed* [the Black Prince] to go as his lieutenant to Gascony."<sup>29</sup> The king undeniably had the authority to commission and appoint representatives. There were precedents for this in both England and Gascony. The English king had long possessed the right to appoint the Seneschal of Gascony and the Constable of Bordeaux, although the Bordelais did have the right to elect their own mayor.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Edward III had sent expeditions to Gascony before 1355.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the Black Prince's expedition was not without precedent, nor was his appointment by the king, a precedent the Black Prince did not fail to point out to the people of Bordeaux (discussed below).

However, the scope of the Black Prince's authority was, to some extent, broader than that granted to previous military commanders. The Black Prince, as specified in the indenture, had the king's authority to act on the king's behalf and in the king's stead. The precise wording states "as if the king were there in person."<sup>32</sup> The indenture's wording suggests that whatever the Black Prince decided would bind Edward III, as well. This refers particularly to truces, acquisition of lands, use of funds, making ordinances, and the punishment of "any who are rebellious and disobedient."<sup>33</sup>

The indenture, along with precedent and the king's power to endow the Black Prince with royal authority, provides a clear, contractual basis for the Black Prince's authority and, of perhaps greater import, legitimacy. First, it was a written and recorded document. The symbolic value of a written document deposited in a royal archive was not lost upon anyone. Not only was the indenture recorded in the Black Prince's register, but it was also recorded in the *Livre des Coutumes* in Bordeaux.<sup>34</sup> Along with increasing

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29 "... Tesmoigne ... le Roi ad ordine son dit filz daler en Gascoigne destre son lieutenant ..." BPR, IV (see note 7), 143; TNA, E 36/278, f. 88r. Emphasis mine.

30 Christopher Turgeon, "Bacchus and Bellum: The Anglo-Gascon Wine Trade and the Hundred Years War (987–1453)," M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, 2000.

31 Henry of Grosmont, earl and later duke of Lancaster, for example, led an expedition to Gascony in 1350.

32 "... Come le Roi y feust meismes." BPR, IV (see note 7), 144 ; TNA, E 36/278, f. 88r.

33 "Des rebeux [et] desobeisantz ..." BPR, IV (see note 7), 145 ; TNA, E 36/278, f. 88v.

34 BPR (see note 7); *Le Livre des Coutumes*, ed. Henri Barckhausen (Bordeaux: G. Gounouilhou, 1890). The *Livre des Coutumes* is a register of notarial records pertaining to the city and diocese of Bordeaux. The *Livre* states "per nos notarios infrascriptos fieri publica instrumenta quanta

literacy, “written orders came to derive authority from established structures of courts and administrations, and from the demands and punishments they enforced.”<sup>35</sup> The Black Prince’s written orders, then, not only granted him authority but also were an important symbol of it.

Further legitimizing the Black Prince’s position was the fact that the Gascons themselves had invited the expedition.<sup>36</sup> The Gascon embassy was led by Jean de Grailly, the Captal de Buch (d. 1376), Aguer de Montaut, Lord of Mussidan, and Guillaume Sans, Lord of Lesparre,<sup>37</sup> and it specifically asked for the Black Prince to lead the English forces. According to *Le Vie du Black Prince Noir*, Jean de Grailly, the Captal de Buch, led a contingent of Gascon barons to London and requested “a chieftain of your [Edward III’s] blood.”<sup>38</sup> When the Black Prince arrived he “was received with honor,”<sup>39</sup> and the Gascon aristocracy and clergy turned out to greet him: “they arrived at Bordeaux where the noble barons of those parts rejoiced at their [the English] arrival.”<sup>40</sup> Following the celebratory greeting, the letters patent appointing the Black Prince as the king’s lieutenant were read aloud at the cathedral of Saint Andrew in Bordeaux “in the presence of many lords of Gascony, and the canons, the nobles and citizens of Bordeaux.”<sup>41</sup> Although it was already a *fait accompli*, the Black Prince gave the appearance of consulting the great men of Gascony, and the great men showed up. According to the *Livres des Coutumes*, the list of men attending included eleven men described as “nobiles viri” (“noble men”) and seventeen men described as “venerabiles viri” (“venerable, august men”). These men were nobles, “*milites*,” citizens of Bordeaux, and clerics. Among them was

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eisdem et eorum cuilibet fuerint necessaria ad memoria (sic) premissorum omnium futuris temporibus perabendam (essentially, written below, by our notaries, are the public acts/documents that it is necessary to preserve for the future),” *Le Livre des Coutumes*, ed. Henri Barckhausen (see above), 444.

<sup>35</sup> Reynolds, “Secular Power” (see note 13), 20.

<sup>36</sup> Herbert James Hewitt, *The Black Prince’s Expedition of 1355–1357* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), 2–3.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Hoskins, *In the Steps of the Black Prince: The Road to Poitiers, 1355–1356* (Woodbridge, Rochester: Boydell Press, 2011), 15; Green, *The Black Prince* (see note 15), 53; Clifford Rogers, *War: Cruel and Sharp* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 293–94.

<sup>38</sup> “... Chieftaine de vostre sang.” Chandos Herald, *La vie du Prince Noir by Chandos Herald*, ed. Diane B. Tyson. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, 147 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1975), 63, lines 542–43.

<sup>39</sup> “... Receptus est cum honore ...,” Baker, *Chronicon* (see note 23), 229.

<sup>40</sup> “Qu’ils arriverent a Burdeaux, / Dount moult fesoient grauntz reveaux / Lui noble baround de pais,” Chandos Herald, *La vie du Prince Noir* (see note 38), 65, lines 617–19.

<sup>41</sup> “En présence de plusieurs seigneurs de la Guyenne, et de chanoines, de nobles et de bourgeois de Bordeaux,” *Livre des Coutumes* (see note 34), 439.

Jean de Grailly, the Captal de Buch, one of the original Knights of the Garter and one of the Gascons who had come to England seeking aid against France and Armagnac.<sup>42</sup> What is particularly worthy of note is that of the eleven men described as “nobles” at least seven of them served on the expedition, including the Captal de Buch.<sup>43</sup>

The choice of location for the ceremonial reading of the letters patent was not accidental. Rather, it was a deliberate and conscious decision. By choosing the cathedral the Black Prince was associating himself with existing centers of power, both temporal and ecclesiastical, in Bordeaux and Gascony and added a degree of solemnity and prestige to the reading of the Black Prince’s orders. The Black Prince, as other kings and princes had done before him, linked himself and his presence in Gascony “to other symbols of identity,” which “enhance[d] [his] legitimacy and security.”<sup>44</sup> The Black Prince’s decision to use the cathedral was also rooted in English traditions. Edward III had long made use of the pulpit to promulgate his message to his subjects. For example, the king asked the archbishops, friars and university chancellors to say prayers for his men and himself.<sup>45</sup> Reading documents in public had a long history in England, and these readings were generally done in both Latin and the vernacular, thereby reaching the largest possible audience.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, by visually linking his temporal authority to the ecclesiastical authority of the archbishop, the Black Prince attempted, at the very least, to make it appear as though his temporal authority was backed by the regional religious leaders.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Livre des Coutumes* (see note 34), 444. Grailly is mentioned in Baker, *Chronicon* (see note 23); Rymer, *Foedera* (see note 5); and Chandos Herald, *La vie du Prince Noir* (see note 38), among other places. See also Hewitt, *The Black Prince’s Expedition* (see note 36), passim.

<sup>43</sup> Hewitt, *The Black Prince’s Expedition* (see note 36), passim; Baker, *Chronicon* (see note 23); Rymer, *Foedera* (see note 5); *Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office* (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1892–) (hereafter *CCR*); *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office* (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1891–) (hereafter *CPR*); *Livres des Coutumes* (see note 34).

<sup>44</sup> Yale H. Ferguson and Richard W. Mansbach, *Politics: Authority, Identities, and Change* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 10–11. The extended quote reads: “To the extent that governments can link themselves to other symbols of identity, they enhance their legitimacy and security.”

<sup>45</sup> Hewitt, *The Black Prince’s Expedition* (see note 36), 14.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066–1307* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 266.

<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately, we can only speculate on the Black Prince’s relationship with the archbishop at that time. We do know that later archbishops, such as Francesco Ugucconi, supported English claims to Gascony and worked to further them.

## Authority Demonstrated by Seals and Soldiers

The Black Prince also drew on the tradition of confirming privileges and franchises. After reading the letters patent, he received the oaths of the assembled Gascon nobles and then confirmed the “franchises, privileges, liberties, laws and customs which my ancestors, the good kings Henry and Edward”<sup>48</sup> had established, thereby explicitly linking himself to Henry III (r. 1216–1272) and Edward I, the last two English kings to visit the duchy.<sup>49</sup> This is particularly significant because the Gascons were certainly aware that it had been more than fifty years since the Duke of Gascony had been in the duchy, and the envoys were quick to point out that sending the Prince of Wales would not only have obvious political advantages but also strengthen the loyalty of the Gascons. As Baker writes, “this greatly strengthened the loyalty of Gascony.”<sup>50</sup> Edward of Woodstock as Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, Earl of Chester, king’s lieutenant in Gascony, and a Knight of the Garter had personal authority by birth. His demonstrated prowess, and his position, his office as Prince of Wales and eldest son of Edward III, gave the expedition legitimacy and was itself a symbol of English royal authority. It is not coincidence that John II, in his letter to the inhabitants of Carcassonne two weeks after the *bourg* had been destroyed, promised to send an army with his son.<sup>51</sup>

A new seal was also made specifically for the Black Prince’s use in Gascony. John Grenewich, goldsmith, received 4*l* 17*s* 1*d* upon delivery of a seal, which weighed 37*s* 1*d*.<sup>52</sup> Whether this is a personal seal or a version of the king’s “great seal” mentioned in the indenture cannot be known. As the Black Prince is known to have had a seal that bore the same design as the king’s, it is likely, though, that this seal depicted the enthroned king on one side and the king mounted on the other, the predominant imagery of the great seals of English kings that displayed “the two principal facets of sovereignty, the king

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48 “... Franchises, prevelegis, libertes, fors e coustumes, lesqueire mes ancestres, les bons reys Henri [et] Eudduart,” *Livre des Coutumes* (see note 34), 443. Fors could also be interpreted as public places or jurisdictions.

49 Henry III used the duchy as a base for wars in 1230 and 1242. Edward I visited the duchy several times, 1254–1255, 1260–1261, possibly 1262, 1273–1274 on his return from crusading, and 1286–1289.

50 “... Valde confortavit fideles de Vasconia.” Baker, *Chronicon* (see note 23), 128; Hewitt, *The Black Prince’s Expedition* (see note 36).

51 Thomas Agustin Bouges, *Histoire ecclésiastique et civile de la ville et diocèse de Carcassonne* (Marseille: Laffitte, 1978 [orig. 1741]), 242–43.

52 BPR, IV (see note 7), 166.

sitting to dispense justice and riding to lead in battle.”<sup>53</sup> These images were wholly in line with the Black Prince’s stated mission, and the similarity to the king’s seal underscored the Black Prince’s standing and authority.<sup>54</sup> Imagery aside, the seal itself was an important symbol of the Black Prince’s royal authority, as even deputed seals, entrusted to officials conducting businesses “in the king’s name” but not in the royal household or chancery, still “carr[ied] the same royal authority” as the great seal.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious sign of the Black Prince’s authority was the real power he held by virtue of his place at the head of a military force. The presence of his soldiers, probably between five and six thousand in number,<sup>56</sup> certainly re-enforced his authority because they were the coercive force, or power, that backed it. He also did not hesitate to use that force. Only two weeks after arriving in Gascony in September 1355 the Black Prince and his forces set out on a *chevauchée* across southern France. It took them out of Gascony, through disputed territory, and into France—past Toulouse and Carcassonne and to Narbonne and back to Bordeaux, a journey of some 800 km. They burned towns, destroyed churches and hospitals, and ravaged the countryside, bringing war to parts of France that had been little affected by it. The damage caused was significant. For example, in the village of Montesquieu “due to the English war, the number of taxable households . . . was only forty after the year 1378,”<sup>57</sup> suggesting a significant reduction in the population still evident more than twenty years later.<sup>58</sup> There are also many records of subsidies and exemptions granted by the French crown to help with rebuilding ravaged towns.<sup>59</sup> Castelnau-dary, for instance, was allowed to use one third of all fines for repairs, and in 1356 a royal charter was issued for reconstruction.<sup>60</sup>

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53 P. D. A. Harvey and Andrew McGuinness, *A Guide to British Medieval Seals* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 28. According to Harvey and McGuinness, the Black Prince was unique among heirs to the English throne in this particular instance.

54 Harvey and McGuinness, *A Guide to British Medieval Seals* (see note 53), 28.

55 Harvey and McGuinness, *A Guide to British Medieval Seals* (see note 53), 38.

56 For discussion of the size of the Black Prince’s forces see Hewitt, *The Black Prince’s Expedition* (see note 36), chapters 1 and 2; Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War: Trial by Fire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Hoskins, *In the Steps of the Black Prince* (see note 37), among others.

57 Antoine-Lucien Cazals, *Une page de l’Histoire de Lauragais ou Histoire de la ville et de la communauté de Montesquieu-sur-Canal, depuis les temps les plus anciens jusqu’à nos jours* (Toulouse: Pinel, 1883), 32.

58 Hoskins, *In the Steps of the Black Prince* (see note 37), 57.

59 Hoskins, *In the Steps of the Black Prince* (see note 37), *passim*.



The Black Prince's expedition was remarkably successful, even without the capture of John II, when considering the stated aims of punishing rebels, aiding the Gascons, and carrying the war to France. Towns, such as Arouille, that had once been English but had fallen to the French were brought back under English control,<sup>61</sup> and the lands belonging to Armagnac were devastated. The success of the 1355 raid, moreover, strengthened the loyalty of the Gascons, which stood the Black Prince in good stead the following year.<sup>62</sup> A number of Gascon lords formally changed their allegiance in April 1356, including Jean de Galard, Sire de Limeuil; the Sire de Caumont; Bertrand de Durfort; and Gaillard de Durfort, Sire de Grignols, among others.<sup>63</sup> For those who did change sides it was a complicated affair involving complex negotiations and often financial inducements. For example, Henxteworth, the Black Prince's cashier for the expedition, records payments to Gascons nobles who "for this reason came to their obedience to their lord, the King of England."<sup>64</sup> This represents the recognition that these nobles could face consequences for their change of loyalty. The fact that these men switched sides following the 1355 *chevauchée* suggests a connection between the Black Prince's expedition and their decisions. In other words, the Black Prince's application of force and coercive power convinced these men that their best interests would be served by denying the authority of the French king and submitting to the authority of Edward III, suggesting in this case that the military success of the Black Prince had re-established, if not created, English royal authority in Gascony. More cynically, it suggests that these Gascon nobles may have considered continued loyalty to the French crown a losing proposition and therefore chose to submit to English authority, hoping to further their own interests.<sup>65</sup>

The 1355 *chevauchée* also thoroughly disrupted the economic productivity of the region, which was a severe blow to France and the ability of the French to withstand further English attacks. John de Wengefeld, the Black Prince's steward, explained "the countryside and towns which have been destroyed in

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60 Jean Froissart, *Oeuvres de Froissart: Chroniques*, ed. Joseph Marie Bruno, Baron Constantin Kervyn de Lettenhove, and Auguste Scheler (1867; Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1967), 346–47.

61 Hoskins, *In the Steps of the Black Prince* (see note 37), 33.

62 Hewitt, *The Black Prince's Expedition* (see note 36), 71.

63 Robert of Avesbury, *Adæ Murimuth Continuatio chronicarum. Robertus de Avesbury, De gestis mirabilibus regis Edwardi Tertii* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1889), 449, and Joseph Moisant, *Le Black Prince Noir en Aquitaine 1355–1356–1362–1370* (Paris: A. Picard et fils, 1894), 47–48.

64 "... Causa adventus sui ad obedientiam domini Regis Anglie." London, Duchy of Cornwall Office, Journal of John Henxteworth, folios 101 and 109. See also entries in Kew, The National Archive, Pipe Roll, 36 Ed. III, mm. XV.

65 Such actions were not without precedent throughout the period of English rule in Gascony.



this raid produced more revenue for the king of France in aid of his wars than half his kingdom.”<sup>66</sup> If nothing else, his campaign—the destruction of 1355 and the capture of John II in 1356—showed the people of Languedoc that France could not protect them from the depredations of the Anglo-Gascon army. That, in and of itself, would have been a powerful message.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the only thing that dampened the Black Prince’s pleasure in his success in 1355 was the failure to bring the French to battle,<sup>68</sup> but he would meet that goal the following year.

## Limits on the Black Prince’s Authority

Despite the Black Prince’s broad powers, his authority in Gascony was not without its limits. He was bound, not only by the indenture but also by English and local laws and customs. First, the indenture carefully preserved certain rights for Edward III, for example the ransom for “the head of the war [John II], and in his case the king will give a suitable reward.”<sup>69</sup> The Black Prince also served in Gascony “during the king’s pleasure.”<sup>70</sup> He seems to have been aware of the limits of his authority. For example, the indenture stipulated that “[t]he Prince shall have full power under the king’s great seal to make truces, long or short, and armistices.”<sup>71</sup> However, when the pope sent envoys to negotiate between the Black Prince and the French, the Black Prince, according to both his letter of 25 December and Wengefeld’s letter of 23 December, “sent letters back to them saying that if they wanted to

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**66** John de Wengefeld, “Letter to the Bishop of Winchester, 23 December 1355,” *The Life and Campaigns of the Black Prince*, ed. Barber (see note 24), 52. The original text of the letter appears in Robert of Avesbury, *De gestis mirabilibus regis Edwardi Tertii* (see note 63), 442: “... Car lez pays et lez bones villes qu sount destruitz a ceste chivache trova a roy de Fraunce plus chescun an a maintenir sa guerre qu ne fist la moite de soun roialme ... .”

**67** See Hoskins, *In the Steps of the Black Prince* (see note 37) for discussion of the Black Prince’s strategy of destroying towns but not wasting time on sieges, as success did not mean destroying every town but rather just enough to make the point.

**68** Edward, Prince of Wales, “Letter to the bishop of Winchester, 25 December,” *The Life of the Black Prince*, ed. Barber (see note 24), 53–54. The Black Prince repeatedly mentions that the enemy would not give battle. The tone of the letter, though, is optimistic, and it is clear that he is pleased with the campaign.

**69** “... Le chief de la guerre [et] en ciel cas le Roi lui ferra convenable regard.” *BPR*, IV (see note 7), 145; TNA, E 36/278, f. 88r.

**70** “... Tan come plena au Roi ...” *BPR*, IV (see note 7), 144; TNA, E 36/278, f. 88r.

**71** “Le dit Prince eit pleni poir douz le grand seal le Roi de prendre treves longues ou courtes [et] soeffrances le guel gil voco ...” *BPR*, IV (see note 7), 144 ; TNA, E 36/278, f. 88r.

negotiate, they should go to him [Edward III], and we would do whatever he commanded” because the Black Prince “did not want to enter into any treaty until [he] knew the wishes of our most honored lord and father the king, particularly since [he] had news that he had crossed into France with an army.”<sup>72</sup> This exchange suggests a few possibilities. First, the King’s presence superseded the Black Prince’s authority and the Black Prince yielded to a superior authority. The indenture did state the Black Prince should be obeyed “as if the king were there in person,”<sup>73</sup> so perhaps this changed when the king was, indeed, there in person. Second, the Black Prince did not have the authority to conclude an actual treaty, only truces and armistices. Third, the Black Prince had no interest in negotiations. While the third possibility might seem brash, arrogant or as if the Black Prince was looking for a fight—which he was—his decision might also reflect a desire to remain mobile and avoid anything that could result in his forces being trapped in hostile territory for any length of time. A fourth possibility is that the Black Prince’s actions were totally in line with English policy and that his response to the pope was an effort to stall, thereby aiding the English advance without directly and definitely rejecting the pope’s offer.

Furthermore, while the Black Prince technically had the power to confiscate lands and other property from disloyal subjects or vassals who had not met their obligations,<sup>74</sup> he could only do so under the power of a commission. According to Bracton (*De Legibus*) and Fortescue’s theories, the king could only deprive a subject of their goods (and lands) with lawful cause and in accordance with the “law of the land” and before judges.<sup>75</sup> Emphasizing the Black Prince’s and England’s judicial, for lack of a better term, powers was in line with earlier

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<sup>72</sup> “... Car nous ne vorrons entrer en tretee nulle, tantqe nous seoussiens la volente nostre tres honure seigneur et piere le roy, et nomement par cause qe nous avons nouvelles qe nostre seigneur estoit passe la meer oveage soen poair. Einz lour remandasmes par noz lettres qe, sils vorront treter, ils se treassent devers luy, et ceolqil nous voirroit comander nous le ferrons ...,” Edward, Prince of Wales, in letter to the Bishop of Winchester, 25 December, *The Life and Campaigns of the Black Prince*, ed. Barber (see note 24), 54. The original text of the letter appears in Robert of Avesbury, *De gestis mirabilibus regis Edwardi Tertii* (see note 63), 435.

<sup>73</sup> “... Come le Roi y feust meismes.” *BPR*, IV (see note 7), 144; *TNA*, E 36/278, f. 88r.

<sup>74</sup> Technically, this theory is not significantly different from that governing the confiscation of Gascony by the French kings.

<sup>75</sup> Ranulf de Glanville, *De Legibus et consuetudinibus regni Angliæ*, ed. George E. Woodbine (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1932); Sir John Fortescue, *De Laudibus legum anglie*, Stanley B. Chrimes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942); Doe, *Fundamental Authority* (see note 12), 27. Doe discusses the concept of the king’s subjection to the law extensively.

English policy in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. It was a “claim to ultimate judicial superiority”<sup>76</sup> in Gascony. Edward III understood how his predecessors had used this strategy—and understood how the French king used the right of appeal to the Parlement of Paris to destabilize his authority in Gascony—and by granting such power to the Black Prince made a specific claim about English royal authority in Gascony: Edward III was the final authority.

Of equal importance was the shift in the royal administration’s attitude toward treason and approach to the upper levels of society, particularly in terms of criminal law. The Statute of Treason of 1352<sup>77</sup> included several important limitations on monarchical power. The Statute of Treason limited the scope of treason, which had been broadly defined before the Black Death.<sup>78</sup> This concession, along with other aspects of the Statute of Treason, suggests that Edward III was taking a co-operative approach to governing.<sup>79</sup> This approach included the magnates and gentry, who were the primary beneficiaries of the changes made in the 1352 statute. The Black Prince would certainly have been aware of this, and no doubt the four earls (Oxford, Salisbury, Suffolk, and Warwick) who accompanied him to Gascony were equally aware of their rights under the new statute.

The mere presence of the earls, all of whom except Salisbury were of Edward III’s generation, imposed limits on the Black Prince’s authority. He had able advisors and was expected to listen to them, even if he did not take their advice. However, the presence of the earls in the Black Prince’s retinue also underscored his royal authority. The earls had both rank and personal retinues,<sup>80</sup> which made them prominent figures in their own right. Nine of the original Knights of the Garter, including the earls of Warwick and Salisbury and the Captal de Buch,<sup>81</sup> added prestige and panache, and their presence as the Black Prince’s advisors and subordinates was an important symbol of his

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76 R. R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: The Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100–1300*. The Wiles Lectures given at the Queen’s University Belfast (Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 105.

77 J. G. Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in England in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge Studies in English Legal History (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), especially 59–101.

78 Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death* (see note 14), 26.

79 Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death* (see note 14), 27.

80 Hewitt, *The Black Prince’s Expedition* (see note 36), 22.

81 The Knights of the Garter on the 1355 expedition were: Edward of Woodstock, Prince of Wales; Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick; William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury; Jean de Grailly, Captal de Buch; John, Lord L’Isle; Bartholomew de Burghersh; John Beauchamp; John, Lord Mohun; Nigel Loring; John Chandos; James de Audley; and Walter Paveley.

authority. These soldiers were known, most had served at Crecy, and they had well-deserved reputations, and the relatively untested (in terms of command) Black Prince commanded and led them.

## Conclusion

The underlying purpose of the Black Prince's expedition was the assertion of English royal authority in Gascony, not only to bring disloyal subjects back to their obedience but also to impress upon the French king and his officers, such as John of Armagnac, that Edward III was committed to maintaining his sovereignty and authority in Gascony. This was an important strategic goal for the English king because sovereignty was at the heart of the conflict between France and England, as well as providing "a viable, even a vital, source of legitimacy for European princes."<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, "sovereignty was *bestowed* by them [the princes] upon one another and was not some independent attribute."<sup>83</sup> In this case, the bestower would be John II of France, and Edward III desired that John II grant him (Edward III) full sovereignty in Gascony. Edward III's policies were aimed at accomplishing this goal, and sending the Black Prince to Gascony for the express purposes listed in the indenture served that aim.

In order to accomplish that goal Edward III bestowed royal, obliging authority on the Black Prince. This was done through the use of symbols (seals, indentures, etc.) and the provision of soldiers, themselves a symbol of that obliging authority as well as the coercive power available to enforce it. The Black Prince's expedition, his use of coercive power and manipulation of symbols, compelled obedience, buttressed the legitimacy of Edward III's position in Gascony, and furthered the English king's efforts to claim full sovereignty in Gascony. The 1355 expedition did not succeed in forcing John II to relinquish his ultimate sovereignty over France, nor did he cede sovereignty over any other part of France through which the Anglo-Gascon army campaigned. It did, however, succeed in calling the authority and power of the French king into question, enough so that Gascon nobles turned back to England. In that respect, the expedition was a definite success and the Black Prince effectively re-established royal authority over the Gascons—at least for the moment.

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<sup>82</sup> Ferguson and Mansbach, *Polities* (see note 44), 11.

<sup>83</sup> Ferguson and Mansbach, *Polities* (see note 44), 11–12. Emphasis mine.

In what was ultimately a contest for the loyalty of elites, the assertion of English royal authority and power, obliging those elites to respect both, was a necessary facet of Edward III's strategy to extend his authority and establish his uncontested sovereignty over Gascony. John II certainly understood the gravity of the situation. His letter to the inhabitants of Carcassonne implies that he had some legitimate concerns about the *chevauchée*'s impact, particularly "on the cohesion of his realm and the loyalty of his subjects in the Languedoc."<sup>84</sup> The Black Prince's expedition effectively demonstrated not only the reach of England's power but also the limits of France's power, and power, in this instance, was the foundation of authority. Where power led, authority—it was hoped—would follow.

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<sup>84</sup> Hoskins, *In the Steps of the Black Prince* (see note 37), 66.



Charlotte Vainio

# Empowered Spouses: Matrimonial Legal Authority in Sweden 1350–1442<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In 1840 the acclaimed professor of law, J. J. Nordström, wrote that a husband during the Middle Ages had the right, without repercussions from worldly authority, to punish his wife as he pleased, to sell her or even to take her life.<sup>2</sup> Since then, gender research has fundamentally changed the view of the husband's authority over his wife, but the basic principle of Swedish gender research is nonetheless women's subordination to men, and women, with the possible exception of widows, have been widely considered minors.<sup>3</sup> Seemingly, all research concerning women's agency in medieval Sweden assumes that a wife's agency is interconnected with the *malsman* system, though this system as such has not yet been the focus of any major studies.<sup>4</sup> The word *malsman* is usually translated as "legal guardian" and the legal responsibilities stipulated in the law—to "seek and answer" for the wife—are commonly interpreted as the husband representing his wife in legal matters of

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1 I am indebted to Mia Korpiola for her comments and advice during the process of writing this article. I also wish to thank Kirsi Kanerva for her valuable comments, and Rose-Marie Peake for endless support and many cups of tea.

2 Johan Jakob Nordström, *Bidrag till den svenska samhälls-författnings historia: Efter de äldre Lagarne till sednare hälften av sjuttonde seklet*, vol. 2 (Helsingfors: J. C. Frenckell, 1840), 60.

3 This is the foundation for most gender-related research on the Middle Ages, a point also made by Christine Ekholst, *För varje brottsling ett straff: föreställningar om kön i de svenska medeltidslagarna* (Stockholm: Historiska institutionen, Stockholms universitet, 2009), 69–70.

4 Gudrun Andersson Lennström, "Makt och myndighet – kring 1686 års lagkommission och kvinnors vardagsmakt," *Sprickor i muren: Funktion och dysfunktion i det stormaktstida rättssystemet*, ed. Gudrun Andersson Lennström and Marie Lennerstrand. *Opuscula historica Upsaliensia*, 14 (Uppsala: Historiska institutionen, 1994), 1–87; Ekholst, *För varje brottsling ett straff* (see note 3); Gabriella Bjarne Larsson, *Laga fång för medeltidens kvinnor och män: Skriftbruk, jordmarknader och monetarisering i Finnveden och Jämtland 1300–1500*. Rättshistoriskt bibliotek, 66 (Stockholm: Institutet för rättshistorisk forskning, 2010); Johanna Andersson Raeder, *Hellre hustru än änka: Äktenskapets ekonomiska betydelse för frälsekvinnor i senmedeltidens Sverige*. *Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis*, Stockholm Studies in Economic History, 59 (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 2011).

all kinds as well as managing her property.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, the *malsman* system will form the context in which I will discuss the husband's legal authority vis-à-vis his wife, as well as the wife as a legal persona, in relation to landed property transactions. I will compare the law with the charters—norms with practice—to discern what authority the husband had regarding landed property and his wife's legal rights. It has been claimed that women's lack of juridical rights was a prerequisite for the function of marriage,<sup>6</sup> but most recent research indicates that this is too simple a view. Married women could and did participate in juridical life, indicating a need for a review of the husband's legal authority and an analysis of the *malsman* system.

In this chapter, authority will be considered both the “[p]ower which an agent appears to possess” and the “power reasonably necessary to carry out the purpose of an agency.”<sup>7</sup> In this respect, authority is the legitimized possibility to act given by the law and the legal systems, disparate from power, which is the ability to act, given by the local community.<sup>8</sup> Though power and authority are interconnected, it has been argued that the legitimized authority was a male prerogative.<sup>9</sup> This would mean that wives could act as substitutes for their husbands in legal matters but that authority was nonetheless exclusively male. It is widely acknowledged that married women in medieval Sweden stood as owners not only of what landed property they inherited from their birth family but also of one third of whatever the couple bought while married, and that they occasionally participated in landed property transactions. By studying these transactions, I will assess the juridical capacity—the legal authority—of the wife as well as that of the husband as *malsman*. Could

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5 Mia Korpiola draws a distinction between the legal guardian (*malsman*) and the marriage guardian (*giftoman*), acknowledging that these different functions might often be invested in the same person. Mia Korpiola, “Marrying off Sons and Daughters: Attitudes Towards the Consent of Parents and Guardians in Early Modern Sweden,” *Less Favored—More Favored: Proceedings from a Conference on Gender in European Legal History, 12th–19th Centuries*, ed. Inger Dübeck et al. (Copenhagen: Royal Library, 2005). E-publication (last accessed on November 11, 2012): [http://www.kb.dk/da/publikationer/online/fund\\_og\\_forskning/less\\_more/](http://www.kb.dk/da/publikationer/online/fund_og_forskning/less_more/), 1–30; here 3.

6 Maria Sjöberg, “Kvinnans sociala underordning: En problematisk historia. Om makt, arv och giftermål i det äldre samhället,” *Scandia* 63 (1997): 165–92; here 165.

7 Irving Shapiro, *The New Dictionary of Legal Terms* (New York: Looseleaf Law Publications, 2005), 11.

8 This difference is, for example, discussed by Judith M. Bennett, “Public Power and Authority in the Medieval English Countryside,” *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 18–36.

9 Bennett, “Public Power and Authority” (see note 8), 19.



women have legal authority? Was it a male prerogative? What effect did the *malsman* system have on matrimonial legal authority?

Previous research has commented that representation was one of the main responsibilities of guardians<sup>10</sup>—in the Swedish context emphasized by the literal translation of *malsman* as “spokesman.”<sup>11</sup> In this chapter representation is considered the act carried out by an attorney, though not necessarily someone trained in law, which requires authorization either from the person being represented or from someone legally responsible for that person.<sup>12</sup> This means that when a husband represented his wife as *malsman* the authority to do so must have been bestowed upon him. I will show that this representative facet of marital legal authority was indeed an integral part of the *malsman* system, but as such not limited to husbands and wives, and that the authority bestowed upon the husband as attorney originated in the wife. Although some functions of a *malsman* correlate with those usually ascribed to a legal guardian, these two terms are not interchangeable, so I will use them separately. I will also argue that legal authority was not a male prerogative during the period in question, as will be shown by compiling testimonials of wives acting as legal persons in their own right—*sui iures*. Thus, I will offer a re-evaluation of the part of the *malsman* system connected to landed property. As a result, the significantly higher number of men than women dealing with landed property cannot be explained by the *malsman* system, but is found to stem from personal power and, more importantly, a view of the family as one unit with husbands and wives taking different roles.

In this article, I will first discuss the different legal status groups in which men and women are found in the law. This is by no means an easy task, since medieval Swedish law did not see all people as legal persons but contained numerous distinctions between different groups—not only men and women but for example rich and poor, free and unfree.<sup>13</sup> Defining these legal status

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10 Ann Ighe, “Replacing the Father – Representing the Child: A Few Notes on the European History of Guardianship,” *Less Favored—More Favored: Proceedings from a Conference on Gender in European Legal History, 12th–19th Centuries*, ed. Inger Dübeck et al. (see note 5).

11 Compare Stefan Melin, *Juridikens begrepp* (Uppsala: Iustus, 2000), 256.

12 Compare Shapiro, *The New Dictionary of Legal Terms* (see note 7), 8, 17.

13 Compare Shapiro, *The New Dictionary of Legal Terms* (see note 7), 167; Anu Pylkkänen, “Construction of Gendered Legal Personhood in the History of Finnish Law,” *Less Favored—More Favored: Proceedings from a Conference on Gender in European Legal History, 12th–19th Centuries*, ed. Inger Dübeck et al. (Copenhagen: Royal Library, 2005).

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[http://www.kb.dk/export/sites/kb\\_dk/da/publikationer/online/fund\\_og\\_forskning/download/A21\\_Pylkkanen.pdf](http://www.kb.dk/export/sites/kb_dk/da/publikationer/online/fund_og_forskning/download/A21_Pylkkanen.pdf): 1–23; here esp. 9–13.

groups as well as the privileges and responsibilities connected with them is all the more important when showing how married women were not considered minors. From there, I will show how wives could wield legal authority, as well as relate the responsibilities and limitations of the husband's authority within the *malsman* system with regards to landed property transactions. Due to the legislation of the time being quite ambiguous and providing the interpreters with vast possibilities to find more or less arbitrary solutions, there is inevitably a discrepancy between law and its practical application.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore important to consider legal authority both as stated in the law and as it was in practice—the latter contingent on non-juridical factors such as traditions, regional diversities and the expectations of the local community.

The main sources are thus two-fold. First there is the legislative side, represented by King Magnus Eriksson's Law of the Realm issued around 1350—the first law meant to accommodate the needs of all people of Sweden.<sup>15</sup> Medieval Sweden was centered around the Baltic Sea and included present-day Finland, but not Skåne, Blekinge and Halland, now the southernmost parts of Sweden, nor Härjedalen and Jämtland in the north-west. The Law of the Realm was essentially updated and reissued in 1442 under King Christopher of Bavaria (r. 1441–1448), as an attempt to legitimize the new ruler. The ratification of King Christopher's Law of the Realm marks the end of my research period.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, there are the contemporary interpretations of the law as shown in the charters from the period of its use. During the time of the Law of the Realm, there were no proper protocols kept and the rural court sessions were rather local assemblies, so-called *ping*, where matters of all kinds were handled. From 1350–1442 about 16,000 charters have been preserved, some as originals, many as later medieval

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Ekholst, *För varje brottsling ett straff* (see note 3), 28.

<sup>15</sup> Magnus Eriksson's Law of the Realm was valid only in the rural areas. At approximately the same time a law for all the urban areas was issued; the Magnus Eriksson's Town Law. Neither the Town Law nor the towns have been included in this article. I have used the editions by Carl Johan Schlyter in *Corpus iuris sueo-gotorum antiqui: Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar* (Lund: Berlingska boktryckeriet, 1827–1869).

<sup>16</sup> Please note that these dates are not actual landmarks but mere artificial facilitators for research purposes. The issue of a law was not the same as it being brought into use, and the regional laws anteceding the *Law of the Realm* were still in active use for decades. Furthermore, the updated *Law of the Realm* was not in extensive use within the first hundred years of its issue. For more on the laws, see, for example, Patrik Åström, *Senmedeltida svenska lagböcker: 136 lands- och stadslagshandskrifter: Datering och dateringsproblem*. Stockholm Studies in Scandinavian Philology, 32 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003).

or early modern copies, and yet others merely as digests.<sup>17</sup> Of these charters, there are approximately 6,000 featuring women, dealing with a vast range of legal matters such as donations, property transactions, last wills and crimes. For each case settled at the *þing*, a charter was issued,<sup>18</sup> showing us that most of the cases brought to the *þing* concerned landed property and that criminal cases were very few. Considering the distribution of the charters and the well-known importance of landed property as a source of power in medieval society<sup>19</sup> this article will focus on the approximately 1,430 charters that mention women in relation to donations and transactions of landed property. Interestingly enough, women appeared in all kinds of positions in these charters—as sellers, creditors, witnesses, and many others. The one position in the charters that women could not hold was that of the *faste*.<sup>20</sup> Though practically all charters bear witness to events relating to the *þing*, by no means were all issued in concurrence with such assemblies. It was not uncommon that women issued charters, which were indistinguishable from charters issued by men, either in formula or formulation.<sup>21</sup> It was, however, noticeably more

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**17** The charters are collected in two databases, the *Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek över medeltidsbrev* (hereafter SDHK) and the *Diplomatarium Fennicum* (hereafter DF) and are easily accessible. SDHK, upheld by the Swedish National Archives, can be found at [www.nad.riksarkivet.se/sdhk](http://www.nad.riksarkivet.se/sdhk) (last accessed on May 10, 2012) and is currently undergoing a complete digitization, where transcripts of the charters along with facsimiles and full bibliographical descriptions will be made available online in the future. DF, found at <http://extranet.narc.fi/DF/df.php> (last accessed on May 10, 2012), is the Finnish equivalent, though currently available only with a minimum of search options and no facsimiles. These sources have been partly edited and printed in the following collections: *Diplomatarium Suecanum* I–ongoing, ed. Joh. Gust. Liljegren et al. (Stockholm: Kungl. vitterhets historie och antikvitetsakademien & Riksarkivet, 1829–ongoing); *Svenskt diplomatarium* I–III, ed. Carl Silfverstolpe (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 1879–1887); *Finlands medeltidsurkunder* I–VIII, ed. Reinhold Hausen (Helsingfors: Finlands statsarkiv, 1910–1935).

**18** Konung Magnus Erikssons Landslag (hereafter MEL), *Corpus iuris Sueo-Gotorum antiqui* X, ed. C. J. Schlyter (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1862), Eghno B. XX–XXII, 110–11. To what extent this was actually followed is unfortunately not possible to determine.

**19** *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Sharon A. Farmer, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology and the Daily Lives of the Poor*. Conjunctions of Religion & Power in the Medieval Past (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 50–51.

**20** The *fastar* (plural, singular *faste*) were a special kind of witnesses—twelve trustworthy men assisting at the *þing*, always accounted for by name, and usually by home village also.

**21** The same conclusion has been reached, for example, by Gabriela Bjarne Larsson, “Kvinnor, manlighet och hushåll 1350–1500,” *Hans och hennes: Genus och egendom i Sverige från vikingatid till nutid*, ed. Maria Ågren. *Opuscula historica Upsaliensia*, 30 (Uppsala: Historiska institutionen, 2003): 81–111; here 104.

common for men to issue charters than for women in general and wives in particular—a subject we will return to later on. First, we will delve into the law and trace the norms regarding matrimonial legal authority and the *malsman*.

## The Husband and Guardian in the Law of the Realm

Several aspects of the law suggest that a husband carried a significant authority vis-à-vis his wife. For example, a husband could and was expected to discipline his wife, but was not allowed to cause her serious harm.<sup>22</sup> Although physical disciplinary methods were common, it is not possible to determine the extent to which a husband might use violence toward his wife, though previous studies suggests a clear line between physical discipline and physical abuse.<sup>23</sup> The authority vested in the man as the head of the household has left few traces, since there were no historical sources produced within the household at this time, and although an integral part of matrimonial life, that authority was not limited to the relationship between the spouses. Children and servants were also supposed to be disciplined in a similar manner, but this was the responsibility of both the husband and the wife. Furthermore, legal doctrine was by no means a direct consequence of the Law of the Realm alone, but predicated on both canon law and the regional laws preceding the Law of the Realm. In particular, canon law would have influenced matrimonial legal authority, both with its emphasis on husbands as heads of household and by accentuating individual consent to marriage.<sup>24</sup> The extent to which either the

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<sup>22</sup> MEL (see note 18), Epzöris B. XXXIII, 260–62.

<sup>23</sup> Ekholst, *För varje brottsling ett straff* (see note 3), 149–52; Lizzie Carlsson, *Jag giver dig min dotter I: Trolovning och äktenskap i den svenska kvinnans äldre historia*. Rättshistoriskt Bibliotek, 8 (Stockholm: Institutet för rättshistorisk forskning, 1965), 28–29; Karin Hassan Jansson, “Väldsgärning, illgärning, ogärning: Könskodat språkbruk och föreställningar om våld i den medeltida landslagen,” *Väld: representation och verklighet*, ed. Eva Österberg and Marie Lindstedt Cronberg (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2006), 145–65; here 149; Emma Hawkes, “The ‘Reasonable’ Laws of Domestic Violence in Late Medieval England,” *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrill Llewelyn Price (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 57–72. See also Albrecht Classen, *Sexual Violence and Rape in the Middle Ages: A Critical Discourse in Premodern German and European Literature*. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 7 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 51.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Mia Korpiola, *Between Betrothal and Bedding: Marriage Formation in Sweden 1200–1600*. The Northern World, 43 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009); eadem, “Marrying off Sons and Daughters” (see note 5). That canon law had distinctive regional interpretations and

older regional laws or canon law affected matrimonial legal authority in relation to landed property transactions has not yet been determined, and for the purposes of this article it is sufficient to conclude that whatever influences there might have been would not alter its conclusions.

The Law of the Realm also deals with the question of legal guardianship and the concept of the *malsman*. Unmarried women and men under the age of 15 were under the guardianship of their father and mother. In this respect, guardianship referred to both parents being legally responsible for the minors in their household. The responsibility for minors is not particularly well covered in the law and the most thorough expositions can be found in the section on marriage. There it is said that the particular aspect of the guardianship relating to marriage—the function of the marriage guardian—was to be held by the father, or in his stead the closest male relative, with the advice of the mother.<sup>25</sup> There is an unmistakable emphasis on the father as guardian, but the mother does nevertheless have responsibilities. For example, in case a maiden took a man against the will of her father and mother, the maiden had to seek explicit forgiveness from both parents equally to regain her inheritance rights.<sup>26</sup> Once the young woman marries we encounter the word *malsman*, as it is stated that once the couple has spent the first night together the husband becomes her *malsman*.<sup>27</sup> This is often considered to imply the same function as that previously held by the father (and mother) as guardian, though the descriptions of the *malsman*'s privileges and responsibilities are very vague. According to the law the husband “owned to seek and answer for her” and though other cases indicate that to “seek” was to appear as plaintiff whereas to “answer” was to be the defendant,<sup>28</sup> in litigation the authority granted the husband remained imprecise.<sup>29</sup> The section has widely been interpreted as the husband having the legal responsibility for his wife, but more recent research

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implications has been shown by Charles Donahue Jr, *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages: Arguments About Marriage in Five Courts* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

25 MEL (see note 18), Gifto B. I, 49–50. Compare this with Korpiola, “Marrying off Sons and Daughters” (see note 5), 3.

26 MEL (see note 18), Gifto B. III, 51–52.

27 MEL (see note 18), Gifto B. IX, 61.

28 Carl Johan Schlyter and Hans Samuel Collin, *Glossarium ad Corpus iuris sueo-gotorum antique: Ordbok till Samlingen af Sweriges gamla lagar* (Lund: Gleerup 1887), entry “svara,” 617; entry “sökia,” 630–32.

29 “[E]gher sökia ok suara for hona,” MEL (see note 18), Gifto B. IX, 61.

has shown that women at the time of the Law of the Realm were individually liable for crimes they had committed.<sup>30</sup>

It has also been suggested that the function of the *malsman* was to represent his wife in all legal matters, even though fines and such like were to be taken from her personally. Since the husband had the legal and economic authority in such a context the wife has been thought to lack legal authority.<sup>31</sup> This view is confirmed by the fact that the word *malsman* is still in use in present-day Swedish, most commonly referring to the legal guardian of a minor.<sup>32</sup>

Another aspect often stressed when describing the husband's status as *malsman* is his management of his wife's property.<sup>33</sup> Women had the right to inherit property from their relatives, but daughters in the rural areas only inherited half as much as sons.<sup>34</sup> Whereas it was common in other parts of medieval Europe for a woman's property to be transferred to her husband upon entering wedlock, this was decidedly not the case in Sweden.<sup>35</sup> Sweden had a bilateral inheritance system, where inheritance was passed on through

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30 Ekholst, *För varje brottsling ett straff* (see note 3), 292–93. See also SDHK (see note 17), no 4113.

31 Inger Dübeck, *Kvinder, familie og formue: studier i dansk og europæisk retshistorie* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2003), 143. It is, however, pointed out later that the woman was not to be considered a minor, just unfit to decide (169). See also Sjöberg, “Kvinnans sociala underordning” (see note 6), 165; Göran Inger, *Svensk rättshistoria* (Malmö: Liber ekonomi, 2011), 23.

32 The modern spelling of the word is *målsman*. In medieval Swedish the spelling of the word varied, since spelling was not yet normalized.

33 This was the case in Denmark, where “the husband was given the right to dispose of her property, that is to sell, mortgage, lease or farm out.” Inger Dübeck, “Property and Authority in Danish Marital Law,” *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400–1900*, ed. Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson. Women and Gender in the Early Modern World (Aldershot, Hants, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 127–40; here 127. For a more thorough analysis of the legal guardian in Denmark, see Dübeck, *Kvinder, familie og formue* (see note 30). Compare this with Carlsson, *Jag giver dig min dotter* (see note 23), 142.

34 MEL (see note 18), Ærfpa B. I, 73. According to the Town Law, however, sons and daughters inherited equally. Compare with Barbara Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 65–68.

35 Carolyne Larrington, *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 164. For Hungary, where daughters inherited a quarter, see Martyn C. Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary*. Studies in Russia and East Europe (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000), 103–07. For Russia see Michelle Lamarche Marrese, *A Woman's Kingdom: Noblewomen and the Control of Property in Russia 1700–1861* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 18–21.

both the maternal and the paternal lines.<sup>36</sup> In law, inherited property brought into a common marital estate would be kept apart and husband and wife did not inherit from each other. In fact, if there were no children as heirs, the property would go back to the original family of the deceased—in Swedish *bakarv*—thus ensuring that certain property remained within a certain family.<sup>37</sup> This means that wives might own a significant amount of landed property to which their husbands had no legal claim. Nonetheless, the numerous paragraphs in the law dealing with the circumstances under which the husband was allowed to dispose of her property clearly indicate that he was the prospective manager of the marital estate as a whole, a status confirmed by the bulk of charters, which have men as issuers. We will return to this shortly in order to determine more precisely what those circumstances were, but first we will turn to the question of legal majority.

## Maidens, Wives, and Widows—Legal Status and the Indicated Authority

In law, marital status was the crucial factor defining legal authority for women; as in legal doctrine these were divided into three different groups; the maiden, the wife and the widow.<sup>38</sup> All of these groups are defined by the woman's relationship with a man—but this does not mean that women were considered legally incapable minors at all times. In fact it is clearly stated in the law who was a minor and who was not. When it came to male legal authority, age

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36 This was the case also in London. See Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives* (see note 33), 54. For other comparisons, see Amy Louise Erickson, "The Marital Economy in Comparative Perspective," *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400–1900*, ed. Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson (see note 33), 3–22. For a discussion of Sweden's bilateral inheritance system, see Christer Winberg, *Grenverket: Studier rörande jord, släktskapssystem och ståndsprivilegier*. Rättshistoriskt bibliotek, 38 (Stockholm: Institutet för rättshistorisk forskning, 1985).

37 MEL (see note 18), *Ærfpa B. II–III*, 74–76. See also the thorough discussion in Winberg, *Grenverket* (see note 36).

38 Compare with Andersson Lennström, "Makt och myndighet" (see note 4), 25, and Andersson Raeder, *Helre hustru än änka* (see note 4), 54. Though outside the scope of this article, Thomas Kuehn adds further statuses like "mother," "daughter," and "sister," a thought well worth noting. Thomas Kuehn, "Daughters, Mothers, Wives and Widows: Women as Legal Persons," *Time, Space and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Silvana Seidel Menchi, Thomas Kuehn, and Anne Jacobson Schutte. Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies, 57 (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2009), 97–115.



rather than marital status decreed majority since men reached a general legal majority at the age of 15.<sup>39</sup> The paragraphs in the law that mention legal majority do not pertain to legal majority as such, but rather explain one of the fundamentals of the Swedish inheritance system—the *bördsrätt*. This right gave the next of kin one year to purchase inherited landed property before it could be offered to non-kindred buyers. In the law there were, however, important exemptions from this time limitation, intended first and foremost to protect the rights of minors. If the next of kin was a minor at the time when the land was sold, then he had a one-year respite after reaching legal majority, that is, after turning 15, to repurchase the land. In the same paragraph, maidens are given the same year-long respite after entering wedlock.<sup>40</sup> According to the law, a married woman was thus given the same legal authority as a man.<sup>41</sup>

It would, however, be a gross oversimplification to interpret this paragraph as a sign of justice and equality between the sexes, or even between women of the same marital status. During the Middle Ages, people did not perceive justice as everyone being equal before the law, but as everyone being treated according to their social status. This is manifested in the many paragraphs of the law that outline circumstances in a case law setting, clearly separating people according to different social strata. For example, a knight was allowed to travel with twelve horses if he was a member of the royal council, but with only eight if he was not. The archbishop, on the other hand, was allowed to travel with a maximum of 40 horses.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, if women and men were not treated equally before the law, it was not an immediate sign of discrimination, but rather displays an

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<sup>39</sup> MEL (see note 18), Eghno B.VIII, 99–100. This was a trait also found in older Roman law, where boys gained basic pecuniary rights at that specific age. See *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Munich: Artemis 1980), entry “*alte*,” 470–71. This age can also be connected with a capacity to carry arms and to work. See Anu Pylkkänen, “Forming the Marital Economy in the Early Modern Finnish Countryside,” *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400–1900*, ed. Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 75–88; here 79; Andersson Raeder, *Hellre hustru än änka* (see note 4), 53–54.

<sup>40</sup> MEL (see note 18), Eghno B VIII, 99–100. The same applied if somebody wanted to trade the property of a maiden or a minor, Eghno B. XVIII, 107.

<sup>41</sup> Barbara Hanawalt cites an agreement regarding wardship from 1408, where the children are entitled to their money once “they come of age, or, being female, marry.” Hanawalt also emphasizes marriage as a transition rite into adulthood. See Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives* (see note 34), 49–52. Kim M. Philips concludes that girls transitioned into a new kind of socially constructed maturity in their early teens. See Kim M. Philips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England 1270–1540*. Manchester Medieval Studies (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 23–24.

<sup>42</sup> MEL (see note 18), Kunungx B. XXII, 32–33.



important facet of medieval legal thinking: there was no concept of equality before the law.

Though women were divided into groups according to marital status, their authority, once married, remained dependent on the financial assets of the husband. From a strictly juridical point of view, the noble status of a wife relied completely on her husband. At the time of the Law of the Realm, nobility—in Swedish referred to as *frälse*—meant exemption from taxes by providing a man with horse and arms in service of the crown, and was not *per se* an inheritable status. The ability to service the crown in this way was surveyed yearly, and any noble not able to fulfill their duties might lose his status and be degraded to taxpayer, just as a farmer who could provide an equipped mounted soldier was elevated to nobility.<sup>43</sup> If a noblewoman became a widow, her status became more precarious, depending on her behavior and ability to continue providing the crown with an armed horseman. Once widowed, she was protected by the law as long as she remained unmarried and did not have a son over the age of 15, that is, a son of legal majority.<sup>44</sup> As long as a widow remained chaste, she enjoyed the same status as her late husband.<sup>45</sup> In the transition from one group to another—from wife to widow—her dependency on her husband's status becomes even more evident. This dependency is perhaps best summarized in the twenty-first paragraph of the King's Chapter: "If she [marries] a nobleman, then he will do service for her estate as well as his own; if she [marries] a farmer, then she will pay taxes and debts like a farmer."<sup>46</sup>

It follows that even though wealth did not pertain to authority as stated in the law, wealth played an important part in determining the possibilities to act in the first place—one's power to act. Ownership of landed property was obviously a requirement for partaking in property transactions, but it also generated trust, as shown, for example, by the emphasis on landowning as a prerequisite for acting as a witness.<sup>47</sup> It is therefore important to consider who

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<sup>43</sup> MEL (see note 18), Kunungx B. XI–XII, 21–25.

<sup>44</sup> MEL (see note 18), Kunungx B. XX–XXI, 31–32. Compare with section XIII, 25–26.

<sup>45</sup> "Ær þet sua æt ænkia ællæ iumfru gör löskalæghe, haui forgiort þetta frælse sum nu ær sakt" ("If a widow or a maiden fornicates, then they have lost the aforementioned nobility"), MEL (see note 18), Kunungx B. XXI § 2, 32. This paragraph refers to a situation in which the husband is deceased, indicating that the couple was seen as joined even after the death of the husband at least, and that both wife and daughters had obligations to fulfill no matter whether the husband and father was alive or not.

<sup>46</sup> "Far hon frælsis man, þa frælse han hennræ goz meþ sino; fa hon bonda, þa qiui hon skat ok skuld sum bunde." MEL (see note 18), Kunungx B. XXI, 32.

<sup>47</sup> MEL (see note 18), þingmála B. XXVI, 229.

owned land, but equally important to discuss how land ownership was connected to legal authority.

## Land Ownership and the Difference between Wives and Minors

As noted above, women in medieval Sweden could own land and remained owners even after getting married. However, the difference between owning and managing property—a cornerstone of Nordic gender research—must be taken into consideration. Ownership of property did not generate authority unless the owner could also affect the management. From a legal point of view, there were no restrictions on owning land in Sweden during the Middle Ages, but numerous and complex directives on how to manage the property. Considering the importance of landed property during the Middle Ages, it is reasonable to assume that management of property would affect a person's legal authority and doubtless be a major factor in determining the extent of one's personal power. As the manager of the marital estate, the husband would have authority over his wife's property, and as we saw in the discussion on legal majority, one of the factors that defined whether someone was legally able was that he or she had the authority to affect property transactions. It could therefore be argued that the authority granted to a married woman was not really hers but was transferred to her husband as the manager of her property.<sup>48</sup> This would mean that even though property ownership was divided between the husband and the wife, it would only bring authority to the husband as manager, and she would in this respect remain a minor. Conversely, women enter the sources as active agents only after becoming wives, indicating that marriage did bring legal authority to women.

The difference between wives and maidens is illustrated by a charter from 1356. Together with his two married daughters Kristin and Elena and their husbands, Niklas Björnsson sold inherited property to Finvid Finvidsson. Kristin and Elena participated in the transaction but their two younger sisters were not allowed to because they were still maidens. However, Niklas

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<sup>48</sup> This is a very common interpretation. See, for example, Winberg, *Grenverket* (see note 36), 107; Sjöberg, "Kvinnans sociala underordning" (see note 6), 173; Bjarne Larsson, *Laga fång* (see note 4), 180, or Kekke Stadin, *Stånd och genus i stormaktstidens Stockholm* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2004), 267–68.

promised to reimburse them or their *malsman* so that they would not bother Finvid in the future.<sup>49</sup> Here we see how minors were not considered legally able, and also how wives were not counted as minors. However, in this specific case, it is not clear that even the married women were acting *sui iuris*—that is, in their own right—since they were participating together with their husbands. This case exemplifies the distinction made between the legal authority of a maiden and that of a wife, but also indicates that the legal authority granted to a married woman cannot be directly compared to that of a husband. To determine matrimonial legal authority more precisely, some crucial aspects of landed property transactions must be addressed.

Owning land in general and managing land in particular was never a private affair. In the words of Anthony Musson: “[e]ven at the lowest level of society it was understood that property was held in relation to the property of others.”<sup>50</sup> In that respect, inherited property was perhaps not as much owned by a member of a family as it was borrowed from the kin group for one’s lifetime, after which it was passed on to the next generation or returned to the next of kin.<sup>51</sup> It is therefore difficult to discern precisely who had authority in property transactions. Many people were involved in each transaction and the internal relationships are not always known to us. Previous research has shown the importance of personal relations in landed property transactions.<sup>52</sup> The role of the husband as *malsman* and manager has been emphasized, and property transactions understood as a male prerogative based on that most people involved in property transactions were men.<sup>53</sup> Though men clearly were more active on the property market, it must be pointed out that not even men had the legal authority to act independently of their kin, since, for example, the *bördsrätt* tied all transactions involving inherited landed property to a group of people, effectively limiting individual rights.<sup>54</sup> With this in mind, we can turn to the few cases in which wives acted *sui iuris*.

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<sup>49</sup> SDHK (see note 17), no 7025.

<sup>50</sup> Anthony Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness from Magna Carta to the Peasants’ Revolt*. Manchester Medieval Studies (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 88.

<sup>51</sup> Carlsson, *Jag giver dig min dotter* (see note 23), 30.

<sup>52</sup> Bjarne Larsson, *Laga fång* (see note 4), 251–52.

<sup>53</sup> Bjarne Larsson, *Laga fång* (see note 4) 177, 188. Cf. Kekke Stadin, *Stånd och genus* (see note 48), 267–68.

<sup>54</sup> MEL (see note 18), Eghno B. II, 95–96; Carlsson, *Jag giver dig min dotter* (see note 23), 29–30.

## Married Women as Property Managers *sui iuris*

Recent research on female agency in Sweden has concluded that wives were restricted by the *malsman* system and could not act without their husband, or a close male relative, at least in the district of Finnveden in southern Sweden.<sup>55</sup> However, any conclusions about the whole realm made on this basis would be very precarious, given the limited area within which this research was conducted and the lack of biographical data for the time in question. In fact, it is often difficult to know whether a woman was a wife or a widow at the time when a charter was issued. The word for wife, “*hustru*,” was a title used extensively in the charters, but it was an honorary epithet. If someone was referred to as *hustru* it meant merely that she was an honorable woman, not that her husband was alive at the time. Unfortunately, it is rare to find women donating or selling landed property during the period in question in any secondary sources, and the prevalence of certain names makes it almost impossible to identify an individual in multiple charters. This means that most cases are built on information from one charter only.

Only an explicit statement in a charter that a woman’s husband is alive or dead can tell us her marital status at the time of its issue. Then again, for her to be acting *sui iuris* her husband cannot participate in the issue, either by giving his consent or by sealing the charter, for example. Even within the limiting criteria defined above, there are 37 cases where wives sold or donated their own landed property and in which the husband did not participate. In addition, there are nearly 400 charters issued independently by women, but where it is impossible to know the condition of the husband with any certainty.

It has been suggested that a wife could act *sui iuris* only if her husband was unable to act on her behalf, thus leaving her without her *malsman* for a limited time.<sup>56</sup> Though this might be the case in all the charters where wives acted *sui iuris*, there are indications to the contrary. First of all, whether the husband was dead or merely unable to act would have been important if this did in fact affect the wife’s legal authority, and therefore one would expect it to be mentioned. In several charters the husband is mentioned as deceased, but this seems to have little to do with authority and more to do with identifying

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<sup>55</sup> Bjarne Larsson, *Laga fång* (see note 4), 209. Bjarne Larsson’s sources are limited to one region of southern Sweden (Finnveden) and one region in what was then Norway (Jämtland/Härjedalen), though the period in question is significantly longer (1300–1500).

<sup>56</sup> Raisa Maria Toivo, *Witchcraft and Gender in Early Modern Society: Finland and the Wider European Experience*. Women and Gender in the Early Modern World (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 141; Andersson Raeder, *Hellre hustru än änka* (see note 4), 54

the woman and/or being a way of honoring his memory.<sup>57</sup> Secondly, there are no charters where husbands confirm previous transactions of their wives during periods when they were unable to act on their behalf.<sup>58</sup> This should be contrasted, for example, with a case when Cecilia Ödgersdotter, widow of Bengt Simonsson, officially confirmed after her husband's death that their jointly held property had been sold by mutual agreement.<sup>59</sup>

This indicates that there were no legal restrictions, not even within the legal guardian system, to wives acting as managers *sui iuris*. It also seems clear that wives, even though not legally restricted from participating in property transactions, did not do so very often. Since there were no prohibitions in the law, the clear trend that men were the main agents in property transactions, emphasized by the fact that married women very rarely bought property,<sup>60</sup> was in all likelihood based on and upheld by expectations within the local community. Consequently, a wife's participation was contingent on the personal power of both her and her husband.

The view that the *malsman* was an attorney rather than a legal guardian is strongly supported by a charter issued by Bothild "wife of Nils" in 1376. Her husband had earlier purchased a property owned by a certain Folke. The property was part of Folke's inheritance, but he had not been present when the property was sold. The transaction had been arranged by Folke's *malsman*, and now Folke claimed his right to repurchase. Hence he settled the affair with Bothild, who owned parts of the property—according to the law she would have been entitled to a third of everything bought by either spouse<sup>61</sup>—

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57 For the husband as an identifier see e.g. SDHK (see note 17), no 9536, no 15605 or DF (see note 17), no 1452. For a mention of the deceased husband with a commemoration, see e.g., SDHK (see note 17), no 10080, no 11132 or no 16088.

58 Compare with Bjarne Larsson, *Laga fäng* (see note 4), 178, where she discusses a charter in which the new husband ratifies a transaction made by his wife during her previous marriage. The charters in question are SDHK (see note 17), no 19899 and *ibid.*, no 20297. See also *ibid.*, no 21652. The transaction was made in 1431 and ratified in 1442. Though this might be a sign of control as is suggested by Bjarne Larsson, I would suggest the very real possibility that the wife had died in the years between the original transaction and the ratification. Compare with, e.g., SDHK (see note 17) no 24149, *ibid.*, no 24287 or no 22871, where men and women ratify transactions made by close relatives, deceased by that time.

59 SDHK (see note 17), no 11132. Compare with Katarina Knutsdotter (Iejon), married to the Norwegian lord Ogmund Finnsson, who after returning from Norway to Sweden issued several charters approbating her relative's affairs with her property in her absence, SDHK (see note 17), no 14642 and no 12112.

60 That women very rarely bought property has been noted previously by Bjarne Larsson, *Laga fäng* (see note 4), 161.

61 MEL (see note 18), Gifto B. XIX, 68.

as they “have both agreed.”<sup>62</sup> Folke’s *malsman* had represented him when he was unable to represent himself, and since the *malsman* had settled a transaction involving Folke’s property, this charter also speaks for property managing as a part of the arrangement between Folke and his *malsman*. Representation and property management were clearly some of the duties of the *malsman*, but as this example shows, these functions were by no means exclusive to the relationship between husband and wife, and did not necessarily reflect the legal authority of the person being represented. As a matter of fact, the husband is never referred to as the *malsman* of his wife in any of the charters. Instead, we find the word *malsman* only as an epithet of a man acting as attorney, regardless of whether the person represented was a man or a woman. I would therefore argue that the *malsman* was a function that may have included both property management and legal representation, but was not dependent on the legal status of the person who had a *malsman*. But if wives were legally capable of acting *sui iures*—as I have argued that they were—why did they not do that more often? And why did the law prescribe them a *malsman*? The answer lies in how the household and the duties of husbands and wives were perceived. Both of these factors are closely connected to the concept of consent.

## Wives and Husbands as Joint Managers and the Concept of Consent

Much more common than wives acting on their own was that married couples acted as one unit for the benefit of the common household—a marriage based on partnership.<sup>63</sup> Joint management comes across in two different ways in the charters. Firstly, a husband and a wife could jointly issue the charter, and secondly, the charter could be issued by one of them with the consent of the other. The extent to which the wife was actually participating as a legally able person is impossible to establish with any certainty. The fact that the property

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<sup>62</sup> SDHK (see note 17), no 10819. The property was bought “aff hans maals mannom” and then repurchased “efhte þy os baþom anøgdhe.” There is admittedly a possibility that Folke was not a minor but had instead been abroad, since the same right for the next of kin to repurchase would have applied in either case. As regards this analysis, whether Folke was a minor or abroad is of secondary importance, since he was still represented.

<sup>63</sup> Toivo, *Witchcraft and Gender* (see note 56), 141; Pylkkänen, “Forming the Marital Economy” (see note 39), 85–87; Andersson Raeder, *Hellre hustru än änka* (see note 4), 117–18, 127; Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives* (see note 34), 116–18, 212.

concerned in these joint cases usually belonged to the wife has been interpreted as an indication of male authority and female subordination; as her *malsman* he was the responsible party in managing all property belonging to either spouse.<sup>64</sup> Though this is a reasonable interpretation, it does not take into account certain facets of the division and exercise of authority.

As discussed above, several paragraphs in the law imply that the husband was the traditional property manager. However, these paragraphs are not aimed at securing his authority as head of household and manager of property, but rather at protecting the interests of the wife and her kin.<sup>65</sup> For example, the husband was forbidden to alienate her property without consent from her and her kin.<sup>66</sup> Research has sometimes emphasized consent from her kin,<sup>67</sup> whereas in practice it seems that the consent of the wife was the defining factor in the legality of the husband's actions.<sup>68</sup> The typical husband required consent only from the wife when disposing of her property, though it is possible in some cases that she may have been the last of her kin and therefore the only one to consent. Nonetheless, the importance of her consent is exemplified in a case from 1398. Helga Anundadotter came before the court and explained how her husband had sold her property against her will. Since she had opposed the alienation, he had "nagged and beaten her until she would let it go."<sup>69</sup> If her consent was not crucial for the legality of the transaction, her husband could simply have sold her property without her consent or forged it. This case, which resulted in Helga getting her property back, shows how the wife had knowledge of the legal status of her own property and perceived herself as having the authority to decide how to manage it. However, it also shows how Helga's personal power was restricted in

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64 Sjöberg, "Kvinnans sociala underordning" (see note 6), 168, 173; Andersson Raeder (see note 4), *Hellre hustru än änka*, 110; Bjarne Larsson, *Laga fång* (see note 4), 177. Compare with the discussion on *femme couverte* in Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives* (see note 34), 116–18.

65 Maria Ågren, *Domestic Secrets: Women & Property in Sweden 1600–1857*. Studies in Legal History (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 40. Her reasoning is founded on King Christopher's Law of the Realm but is applicable also in this case.

66 MEL (see note 18), Gifto B. XX, 68. Compare this with Dübeck, *Kvinder, familie och formue* (see note 31), 153–55, 169.

67 Ågren, *Domestic Secrets* (see note 65), 39.

68 In Norway, the wife had the authority to represent her lineage. Hilde Sandvik, "Decision-making on Marital Property in Norway, 1500–1800," *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400–1900*, ed. Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson (see note 33), 111–26; here 114.

69 The husband "thruhadhe og slo hona ther til at hon skulle aff thy lata," SDHK (see note 16), no 15027.

comparison to that of her husband—not until she was widowed did she bring her case to court.

Consent not only validated a certain transaction but protected the new owner from the sellers' relatives claiming their *bördsrätt*—their pre-emptive right to purchase and repurchase certain landed property. The fear of having a purchase repealed was very real, since the pre-emptive right was extensively invoked.<sup>70</sup> An indication that a wife only gained legal authority when her husband was for some reason unable to act on her behalf is given by the approximately 200 cases where wives sell their own land with their husband's consent. These have been interpreted as cases when husbands supervised their wives' transactions because wives were not legally competent.<sup>71</sup> Taking into consideration the numerous cases where husbands sold their own property with the consent of their wives, the function of spousal consent appears in a different light.<sup>72</sup> Regarding early modern times it has been suggested that spousal consent was an effect of marriage as a partnership,<sup>73</sup> an interpretation that seems valid for earlier centuries also.

I would, however, argue that consent should be seen in two different contexts. Firstly, consent could be given by the landowner, in which case it worked as a power of attorney authorizing an intermediary, and as such was a juridical necessity. This is further demonstrated by several cases where men consented to other men selling their property<sup>74</sup> and was regulated in the law where it was stated that “no man takes another's case as his.”<sup>75</sup> Secondly, consent given by people other than the landowner was intended to ensure that potential heirs using their pre-emptive rights to purchase would not cause the new owner problems in the future.<sup>76</sup> In this light, spousal consent ought to be interpreted as the spouse not owning the land acting on behalf of mutual children. As long as the children were minors, a parent would act as their guardian but it was also through mutual children that spouses became potential heirs to each other's property and thus could gain a pre-emptive

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<sup>70</sup> Ågren, *Domestic Secrets* (see note 65), 38. Ågren points out that annulments were made daily in early modern times, but for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the sources will not permit such calculations.

<sup>71</sup> Bjarne Larsson, “Kvinnor, manlighet och hushåll” (see note 21), 94–95.

<sup>72</sup> See for example SDHK (see note 17), no 12613; *ibid.*, no 15990; *ibid.*, no 18199; *ibid.*, no 18647; *ibid.*, no 21616; *ibid.*, 23589; DF (see note 17), no 1306; *ibid.*, no 1075.

<sup>73</sup> Pykkänen, “Forming the Marital Economy” (see note 39), 85.

<sup>74</sup> For example SDHK (see note 17), no 18647.

<sup>75</sup> MEL (see note 18), Kunungx B. XXV, 38–39.

<sup>76</sup> Compare with Bjarne Larsson, *Laga fång* (see note 4), 178, where she concludes that consent indicates that the property is being sold outside the kin group.



right to purchase. This means that when a spouse was consenting to a transaction involving property belonging to the other spouse, the consent would both indicate guardianship over children and personal interest.

## Conclusion

The *malsman* system was a complex network of representation and reciprocity, of which matrimonial legal authority was a part but not a defining factor. A *malsman* was, as the name implies, an attorney with the authority to speak on behalf of somebody else. He could be endowed with further authority, usually in property management. This status with these accompanying privileges and responsibilities was not dependent on matrimony but, as we have seen, could also be connected to minors or to legally able men who were temporarily unable to manage their own affairs. This means that the *malsman* system existed independently and—more importantly—that having a *malsman* did not affect the authority of the person represented in the same way as having a legal guardian reflecting the incapacity of the ward.

Legal authority was determined by the law, which meant that women gained legal majority and subsequently the authority to engage in legal acts when they entered wedlock, whereas men gained the same status when they reached the age of 15. The legal authority of wives in cases concerning landed property is perspicuous since it seems that wives not only had knowledge of the state of their property but also were legally able to sell and to donate *sui iuris*. The legal authority of married women is also evident in cases when landed property transactions were dependent on consent; the consent of the wife authorized the husband, and a wife could represent underage children when consenting to her husband's transactions.

Why then were husbands named *malsman* of their wives? And why did so few women participate in landed property transactions? There are two plausible explanations for the low number of women in the charters. Firstly, although wives might have had the authority to act, they might not have had the power to act as they wished while their husbands were still alive. Secondly, nothing in the sources suggests that women actually considered the juridical sphere their own, or that they thought participation in landed property transactions was something desirable. These two factors almost certainly coincided and were interdependent, but to what extent each would have affected any given case is difficult to say with the available source material. Nonetheless, wives seem to have left legal actions to their husbands, which is reflected both in the sheer numbers of cases and in the fact that

wives very rarely bought property, and perceived the *malsman* as part of a supportive rather than an oppressive system. This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that some widows chose a *malsman* for themselves. Moreover, it has been suggested that one reason for the high frequency of remarriage was the wish of widows to have a *malsman*.<sup>77</sup>

When it comes to the need for a *malsman* in the first place, the sources are unfortunately abstruse. It must be noted that it cannot be ruled out that all the cases of wives acting *sui iures* are mere exceptions, which would argue against the existence of legal authority of wives. Yet, I think this highly unlikely since the formulations of the charters give no indication that wives acting *sui iures* were something out of the ordinary or doing so by special arrangement. The need for a *malsman* does not stem from female lack of authority, but from household arrangements and the relationship between the spouses. In medieval Swedish jurisprudence the occurrence of letters with a power of attorney is an important but hitherto barely researched area, strongly connected to the *malsman* system. It was stated in the law that acting as a *malsman* without the explicit right to was an offense against the king and incurred the highest fine (40 marks).<sup>78</sup> In over 500 charters we find men and women from all strata of society—from kings to farmers—giving oral power of attorney to a representative, and here lies the answer.<sup>79</sup> It did happen that wives authorized somebody other than their husband to act on their behalf<sup>80</sup>—to be their *malsman*—but in very few cases did wives authorize their husbands to do this.<sup>81</sup> I would thus argue that when the husband was named as *malsman* in the law this worked as a power of attorney, which granted him the possibility to represent his wife without a separate power of attorney, but it remained a right, not a duty. To alienate her property he needed her specific consent as a safeguard that she was aware of the transaction and would not raise complaints in the future.

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<sup>77</sup> One of the few women we can follow over several years is Valborg, who in the early fifteenth century came to the *þing* to choose a *malsman*. SDHK (see note 17), no 17416; *ibid.*, no 17419 and no 17681. Compare with Korpiola, *Between Betrothal and Bedding* (see note 24), 26–27. See also Andersson Raeder, *Hellre hustru än änka* (see note 4), 68, 141–42.

<sup>78</sup> MEL (see note 18), Kunungx B. XXV, 38–39. Compare with SDHK (see note 17), no 8904; *ibid.*, no 11068, and *ibid.*, no 11069, where this paragraph is implemented in practice.

<sup>79</sup> In Latin, it is expressed as *ex parte mea* or *plenam potestatem* and in old Swedish as *fult wald* or *makt*. The importance was placed on the transfer of authority, not on a written document.

<sup>80</sup> SDHK (see note 17), no 9203; *ibid.*, no 20804; *ibid.*, no 10879; *ibid.*, no 12978.

<sup>81</sup> In 1387, Elin Nilsdotter authorized her husband to sell her morning gift, but stated that it was because of her own eye illness that this was the arrangement. See SDHK (see note 17), no 13315. Compare SDHK (see note 17), no 17185.

To gain a more comprehensive view of the intricate *malsman* system the time span must be expanded and other areas, such as criminal law and inheritance structures must be incorporated. I have shown that the *malsman* system did not diminish a wife's legal authority, but questions regarding the distribution of authority vis-à-vis power still remain unanswered, awaiting further research.



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